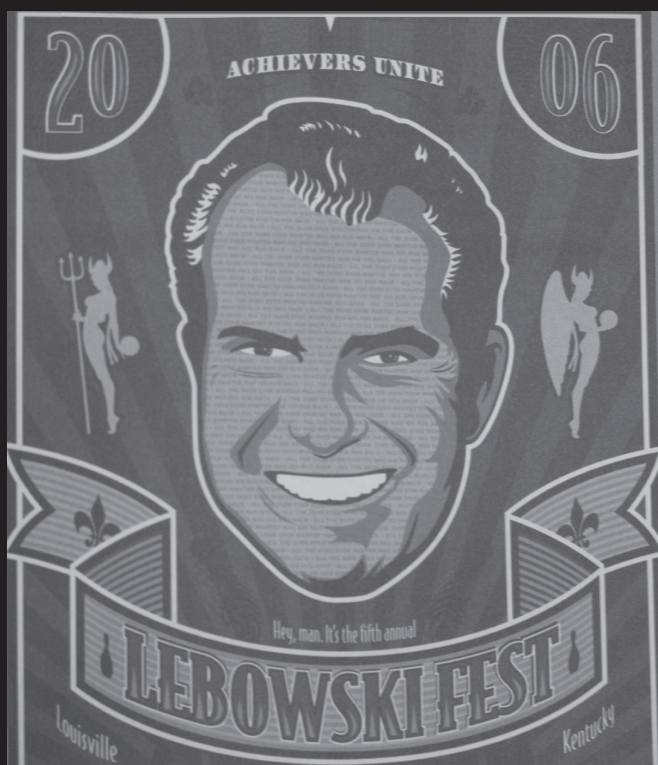


Volume 51 Number 1 Spring 2010



Becoming cult: *The Big Lebowski*

The aesthetics of pastiche

Queering Chinese-language cinema

Star construction and Marilyn Monroe

Screen

Screen

Volume 51 Number 1 Spring 2010

OXFORD

Subscription & order information: Screen (Print ISSN 0036-9543, Online ISSN 1460-2474) is published quarterly in March, June, September and December by Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK. Annual subscription price is £157/US\$314/€236. A subscription to **Screen** comprises four issues. All prices include postage, and for subscribers outside the UK delivery is by Standard Air. Annual Subscription Rate (Volume 51, four issues, 2010): Institutional: (print and online) £157/US\$314/€236 (print only) £144/US\$288/€216 (online only) £131/US\$262/€197. Personal: (print only) £49/US\$98/€74. Please note: US\$ rate applies to US and Rest of World, except UK (£) and Europe (Euros). There may be other subscription rates available, for a complete listing please visit www.screen.oxfordjournals.org/subscriptions.

The current year and two previous years' issues are available from Oxford Journals. Previous volumes can be obtained from the Periodicals Service Company at <http://www.periodicals.com/oxford.html> or Periodicals Service Company, 11 Main Street, Germantown, NY 12526, USA. E-mail: psc@periodicals.com. Tel: (518) 537-4700. Fax: (518) 537-5899.

Full prepayment, in the correct currency, is required for all orders. Orders are regarded as firm and payments are not refundable. Subscriptions are accepted and entered on a complete volume basis. Claims cannot be considered more than FOUR months after publication or date of order, whichever is later. All subscriptions in Canada are subject to GST. Subscriptions in the EU may be subject to European VAT. If registered, please supply details to avoid unnecessary charges. Personal rate subscriptions are only available if payment is made by personal cheque or credit card and delivery is to a private address.

Methods of Payment. (i) Cheque (to Oxford Journals, Cashiers Office, Great Clarendon Street, Oxford OX2 6DP, UK) in GBE Sterling (drawn on a UK bank), US\$ Dollars (drawn on a US bank), or EU€ Euros. (ii) Bank transfer to Barclays Bank Plc, Oxford Group Office, Oxford (bank sort code 20-65-18) (UK), overseas only Swift code BARC GB 22 (GB£ Sterling to account no. 70299332, IBAN GB89BARC20651870299332; US\$ Dollars to account no. 66014600, IBAN GB27BARC20651866014600; EU€ Euros to account no. 78923655, IBAN GB16BARC20651878923655). (iii) Credit card (Mastercard, Visa, Switch or American Express). For further information, please contact: Journals Customer Service Department, Oxford Journals, Great Clarendon Street, Oxford OX2 6DP, UK. Email: jnls.cust.serv@oupjournals.org. Tel (and answerphone outside normal working hours): +44 (0) 1865 353907. Fax: +44 (0) 1865 353485. In the Americas, please contact: Journals Customer Service Department, Oxford Journals, 2001 Evans Road, Cary, NC 27513, USA. Email: jnlorders@oupjournals.org. Tel (and answerphone outside normal working hours): 800 852 7323 (toll-free in USA/Canada). Fax: 919 677 1714. In Japan, please contact: Journals Customer Services, Oxford Journals, 4-5-10-8F, Shiba, Minato-ku, Tokyo 108-8386, Japan. Email: custserv.jp@oxfordjournals.org. Tel: (03) 5444 5858. Fax: (03) 3454 2929.

Oxford Journals Environmental and Ethical Policies. Oxford Journals is committed to working with the global community to bring the highest quality research to the widest possible audience. Oxford Journals will protect the environment by implementing environmentally friendly policies and practices wherever possible. Please see <http://www.oxfordjournals.org/ethicalpolicies.html> for further information on Oxford Journals' environmental and ethical policies.

Permissions. For information on how to request permissions to reproduce articles/information from this journal, please visit www.oxfordjournals.org/jnls/permissions.

Advertising. Advertising, inserts and artwork enquiries should be addressed to Linda Hann, 60 Upper Broadmoor Road, Crowthorne RG45 7DE, UK. Email: lhann@talktalk.net. Tel/fax: +44 (0) 1344 779945.

Disclaimer. Statements of fact and Opinion in the articles in **Screen** are those of the respective authors and contributors and not of The John Logie Baird Centre or Oxford University Press. Neither Oxford University Press nor The John Logie Baird Centre make any representation, express or implied, in respect of the accuracy of the material in this journal and cannot accept any legal responsibility or liability for any errors or omissions that may be made. The reader should make his/her own evaluation as to the appropriateness or otherwise of any experimental technique described.

© 2010: The John Logie Baird Centre.

All rights reserved; no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise without prior written permission of the Publishers, or a licence permitting restricted copying issued in the UK by the Copyright Licensing Agency Ltd, 90 Tottenham Court Road, London W1P 9HE, or in the USA by the Copyright Clearance Center, 222 Rosewood Drive, Danvers, MA 01923. **Screen** incorporates **Screen Education**.

ISSN 0036-9543

Typeset by Techset Composition Ltd, Salisbury, UK.

Printed by Bell and Bain Ltd, Glasgow, UK.

editors

Tim Bergfelder
John Caughie
Annette Kuhn
Karen Lury
Jackie Stacey
Sarah Street

reports and debates editor

Jackie Stacey

reviews editor

Karen Lury

production editor

Caroline Beven

administrative assistant

Heather Middleton

editorial advisory board

William Boddy (USA)
Charlotte Brunson (UK)
Alison Butler (UK)
Erica Carter (UK)
Sean Cubitt (Australia)
Stephanie Donald (Australia)
Dimitris Eleftheriotis (UK)
John Fletcher (UK)
Simon Frith (UK)
Christine Geraghty (UK)
Claudia Gorbman (USA)
Catherine Grant (UK)
Myra Macdonald (UK)
Laura U. Marks (Canada)
Lucia Nagib (UK)
Diane Negra (Ireland)
Alastair Phillips (UK)
Murray Smith (UK)
Will Straw (Canada)
Julian Stringer (UK)
Ravi Vasudevan (India)
Helen Wheatley (UK)

editorial

Screen

Gilmorehill Centre
University of Glasgow
Glasgow G12 8QQ
screen@arts.gla.ac.uk

internet sites:

<http://www.screen.arts.gla.ac.uk>
<http://www.screen.oxfordjournals.org>

51:1 Spring 2010

issue editor
Jackie Stacey

BARBARA KLINGER: Becoming cult: *The Big Lebowski*, replay culture and male fans 1

MARY HARROD: The aesthetics of pastiche in the work of Richard Linklater 21

CHIA-CHI WU: Queering Chinese-language cinemas: Stanley Kwan's *Yang $\pm$ Yin: Gender in Chinese Cinema* 38

ESTHER SONNET: Girl in the canoe: history, teleology and the work of star construction in the early roles of Marilyn Monroe 54

REPORTS AND DEBATES

JACOB SMITH: A town called Riddle: excavating Todd Haynes's *I'm Not There* 71

DOROTA OSTROWSKA: Film Festival Workshop, St Andrew's University 79

REVIEWS

JULIAN STRINGER: Marijke De Valck, *Film Festivals: from European Geopolitics to Global Cinephilia* 82

FINCINA HOPGOOD: Hilary Radner, Alistair Fox and Irène Bessi  re (eds), *Jane Campion: Cinema, Nation, Identity*; Deb Verhoeven, *Jane Campion* 84

STELLA BRUZZI: Murray Pomerance (ed.), *A Family Affair: Cinema Calls Home* 89

ALEXIA SMIT: Kristyn Gorton, *Media Audiences: Television, Meaning and Emotion*; Misha Kavka, *Reality Television, Affect and Intimacy: Reality Matters* 92

MARGARET DICKINSON: Jamie Sexton, *Alternative Film Culture in Inter-War Britain* 95

CONTRIBUTORS 100

NOTES TO CONTRIBUTORS 102

Kov  cs Award goes to *Screen* essay

The editors are delighted to report that Charles R. Acland of Concordia University has won the 2010 Katherine Singer Kov  cs Award for his essay 'Curtains, carts and the mobile screen', published in *Screen*, volume 50, number 1 (2009). We offer him our very warmest congratulations.

cover illustration
Poster from the 2006 Lebowski Fest.

Becoming cult: *The Big Lebowski*, replay culture and male fans

BARBARA KLINGER

After premiering at a number of film festivals, Joel and Ethan Coen's *The Big Lebowski* debuted theatrically in North America in March 1998 as a much anticipated followup to their previous venture *Fargo* (1996). A crime thriller cum regional satire set in North Dakota and Minnesota, *Fargo* had not only quickly become the critics' darling but had grossed three times its \$7 million budget in its initial run. Despite a wider opening in film theatres, *The Big Lebowski*, a comedy noir set in Los Angeles, earned only \$17.5 million in the USA, barely recouping its \$15 million budget. Although the film proceeded to gross an additional \$29 million in film theatres abroad, its reputation as a box-office failure endured.

Unfavourable critical response exacerbated the aura of disappointment surrounding its opening. Of *The Big Lebowski*'s script, one critic wrote, 'It's hard to believe that this is the team that won an Oscar last year for the original screenplay of *Fargo*. The large amount of profanity . . . seems a weak attempt to paper over dialogue gaps.'¹ Another lamented that the Coen brothers were 'more and more taking the lazy-ass David Lynch route by simply throwing weirdness at the screen. [Though] uniquely talented . . . they don't seem capable of learning a damn thing from their previous misfires.'² Judged as a box-office flop and a 'massive artistic failure',³ reviewers blamed what they saw as the film's incoherent plot, bizarre characters and uneven screenplay for its inability to appeal even to the Coen brothers' independent film and arthouse audiences.

Given its inauspicious beginnings, *The Big Lebowski*'s claim on public attention might have ended shortly after it disappeared from the silver screen. But this was far from the case. It became a cult hit in the aftermarket, collecting throngs of die-hard fans worldwide, inspiring

1 Peter Howell, 'Coens' latest doesn't hold together', *Toronto Star*, 19 January 1998.

2 Paul Tatar, 'Big Lebowski is fun, but won't bowl you over', *CNN Interactive*, 5 March 1998. <<http://www.cnn.com/SHOWBIZ/9803/05/review.big.lebowski/>> [accessed 14 November 2009].

3 Steve Palopoli, 'The last cult picture show', *Metroactive Movies*, 25 July 2002. <<http://www.metroactive.com/papers/metro/07.25.02/lebowski1-0230.html>> [accessed 14 November 2009].

- 4 A cult film can gain and retain this reputation even when global markets, home video and time make it financially and critically successful. The distinction of 'marginality', then, is often a convention of cult canonization rather than a reality.
- 5 Among other companies, Working Title Films, the UK studio PolyGram's label, produced *The Big Lebowski*; Gramercy Pictures, a joint venture of PolyGram and Universal, distributed the film theatrically. In 1999 PolyGram became part of Universal; Universal and affiliates thus currently own and distribute *The Big Lebowski*. When Hollywood cult includes films distributed but not necessarily produced by US film studios, we can recognize the significance of mainstream reissues to a film's attainment of cult status, regardless of its point of origin.
- 6 This work extends, at least, from J. Hoberman and Jonathan Rosenbaum, *Midnight Movies* (New York, NY: Da Capo Press, 1991) to Kevin Heffernan, *Ghoulis, Gimmicks and Gold: Horror Films and the American Movie Business, 1953–1968* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004).
- 7 For example, Timothy Corrigan, *A Cinema Without Walls: Movies and Culture After Vietnam* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1991), pp. 80–98; and Mark Jancovich, Antonio Reboll, Julian Stringer and Andy Willis, 'Introduction', in Jancovich et al. (eds), *Defining Cult Movies: the Cultural Politics of Oppositional Taste* (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 2003), pp. 4–5.
- 8 Corrigan, *A Cinema Without Walls*, p. 81.
- 9 Jancovich et al. (eds), *Defining Cult Movies*, p. 4.

commentary on scores of internet sites, and begetting its own fan convention (The Lebowski Fest), its own lingo ('This aggression will not stand, man') and even its own religion ('Dudeism').

The film's reputation as a financial and critical failure no doubt helped to confer upon it the counter-mainstream distinction often associated with cult films and fans.⁴ However, as one of the most prominent post-theatrical success stories in recent memory, *The Big Lebowski* provides additional insight into how many films today attain cult status in a US context. It belongs to a species of cult cinema produced and/or distributed by a major film studio (Universal Studios and affiliates released *The Big Lebowski*),⁵ which may or may not have found box-office success but which attained ritual importance to fans in conventional reissue. While Hollywood has long been linked to cult cinema, diverse titles have of late joined the ranks, including *Scarface* (Brian De Palma, 1983), *Brazil* (Terry Gilliam, 1985), *The Princess Bride* (Rob Reiner, 1987), *The Shawshank Redemption* (Frank Darabont, 1994) and *Donnie Darko* (Richard Kelly, 2001). Acknowledging that routes to cult status vary from film to film, I shall investigate the contributory role that reissues in exhibition venues such as cable and satellite TV and DVD play in materializing conditions of possibility for cult identity to emerge and flourish.

Film historians and critics have frequently treated exhibition as central to defining cult films and audiences. Some regard marginal venues such as midnight movies, independent distribution and mail-order companies specializing in rare or bootlegged videos as vital to the existence and enjoyment of this form of cinema.⁶ These outlets often circulate a host of 'disreputable' or obscure films (low-budget horror, for instance) to the fringe taste cultures seen as comprising cult fandoms. Other scholars, recognizing the sheer number and diversity of films considered cult since the 1970s, point to the quantum leap in exhibition windows and media, including cable TV, the VCR, DVDs and the internet, as being responsible for a cult 'boom'.⁷ As it provides expansive and intensive exposure to media, this accessibility means that 'any movie today can become a cult film'.⁸ More pointedly, since Hollywood films are likely to be subject to insistent, highly visible ancillary rerelease, they are also the prime beneficiaries of a thriving aftermarket, leading to a clear 'mainstreaming' of cult phenomena. In addition, new exhibition modes alter cult fandom's geography, making it 'less dependent on place' and more capable of drawing 'large niche audiences that ... constitute a powerful market force'.⁹ This growth may challenge the sense of exclusivity associated with such fandoms and establish them as ripe for industry exploitation. Not necessarily marginal or moored to specific locales such as repertory houses, many cult fans today hail from influential publics, taste cultures and marketable demographics; more mobile and diasporic, they experience cinema and their own collective identity across assorted media outlets.

10 Sara Gwenllian-Jones and Roberta E. Pearson (eds), *Cult Television* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), p. x.

11 Patrick R. Parsons and Robert M. Frieden, *The Cable and Satellite Television Industries* (Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon, 1998), p. 199.

12 Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2006), pp. 2–3.

My analysis of *The Big Lebowski* pursues further the ramifications of a contemporary ‘booming’ aftermarket for the study of cult cinema and audiences. I explore the film’s modes of ancillary exhibition – what Sara Gwenllian-Jones and Roberta Pearson refer to as among ‘mechanisms’ that render films cult¹⁰ – to analyze both its specific circulation as a cult film and its broader implications for understanding the connections between the aftermarket and fandom in today’s mediascape. Although exhibition is not the only factor involved in creating cult cinema, little research to date has mapped the topography of the contemporary cult film’s circulation in rerelease. What does the current circuitry of cult film exhibition after the theatrical premiere look like? How does the existing flurry of ancillary windows stimulate a film’s transformation into cult, and an audience’s shift into cult fandom? How do these windows affect textual identities, viewing strategies and the constitution of fandoms? Deeply affected by what I call ‘replay culture’, *The Big Lebowski*’s success prompts reflection on the impact of a hyperactive sphere of ancillary exhibition on the contemporary film experience, including the substantial influence of television and the internet on films and their fans.

Replay is neither a new phenomenon in cinema (films have long been rewatched and reissued) nor one consigned solely to this medium (for example, television reruns). Replay culture in the aftermarket today, however, results from a ‘perfect storm’ of developments that has inspired an especially extensive investment in repetition in US media exhibition and viewing. Contemporary replay is produced by media convergence and fostered by the horizontal integration of media companies that gained steam during the emphasis on deregulation in the 1980s; from this era on, corporations increasingly bought businesses across media, including film, television and music companies. These ‘horizontal’ holdings have prompted corporations to repurpose their goods by ‘repackaging’ them ‘for sale in all other forms possible’.¹¹ As one type of repurposing, the film reissue has developed into a vital, lucrative commodity. When films are rereleased after first-run distribution, they are often showcased for years through exhibition venues that stretch from film theatres to the web. No matter what a film’s box-office fate has been, patterns of rerelease over time can dramatically affect its financial profile, critical reputation and viewership.

Since producers, texts and audiences dwell together in a universe of converging media, reception is now definitively affiliated with multiple platforms of access and the associative intertextualities they inspire. As Henry Jenkins argues, convergence is not simply a feature of corporate enterprise but also applies to consumption, as ‘consumers are encouraged to seek out new information and make connections among dispersed media content’, migrating ‘almost anywhere in search of the kinds of entertainment experiences they want’.¹² New technologies and media involved in film exhibition further enhance replay’s role in reception by enabling home viewers to possess and manipulate texts at will. Having a film on DVD, recording it on a DVR or downloading it onto a computer

subjects it to playback's variables: pausing, rewinding, fast-forwarding, repeat viewing and copying. As a film is domesticated, scenes, characters and dialogue may be burned into the viewer's memory, becoming signature aspects of meaning and pleasure and, possibly, providing common ground for the title's collective appreciation. Moreover, domestication may encourage fans to recycle films themselves via blog reviews or DIY internet parodies, for example.

In the contemporary aftermarket, replay culture is defined, then, by expanding outlets for reissues, convergence-inspired repurposing, the growth of the home market and its playback machines, and consumer activities responsive to this climate. As an interactive ensemble, these factors create and endorse a culture of replay, making the already seen and heard into an emblematic feature of the media business and experience today. The contemporary Hollywood cult film secures its identity and attracts a following in this milieu. Yet, modes of exhibition cannot guarantee cult status; instead, recycling provides favourable *conditions* for 'cultification' to occur. It enhances the odds, through sheer repetition, that a film will attract committed viewers. Ultimately, as Matt Hills remarks, 'audience engagement . . . remains the acid test of the media cult'.¹³ Fans must become intensely attached to a film, regarding it as significant in their everyday lives, in personal aesthetics and leisure activities, and in forming bonds with like-minded viewers. When this mode of affect occurs, the reciprocity between replay in media production and consumption is revealed in graphic terms. The establishment of a cult audience inspires the rerelease and marketing of a film as cult to that and other possible audiences, leading to yet more pervasive instances of replay across spheres.

With these issues in mind, my analysis of *The Big Lebowski* begins with an overview of the film, its fandom and types of exhibition that have thus far defined its ancillary circulation, including midnight movies. Since the impact of domestic viewing on creating cult has received little scholarly attention, I then focus on replay culture's role in the home market in fostering the repeat viewings necessary for viewers to fall in love with the film and in otherwise affecting the dynamics of its appropriation. Finally, I examine several windows involved in *The Big Lebowski*'s home recycling – its DVD release, Comedy Central cablecast and presence on message boards and blogs – to consider how synergies between film, television and the web attract a significant segment of the film's cult fandom. This segment – white men ranging in age from their teens to their forties – is highly visible in virtually all representations of this fandom.¹⁴ Media synergies also operate on the film's generic classification (defining it as a slacker/stoner variation of cult) and the authorship of its director/screenwriter duo, Joel and Ethan Coen (portraying their style as a kind of vernacular surrealism). Ultimately, this case illuminates replay culture's role in targeting demographics and building gendered and raced fandoms in the aftermarket. It also permits a view of ordinary dimensions of fandom

13 Matt Hills, *Fan Cultures* (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 136.

14 Here I identify a substantial demographic drift within the film's fan base, discovered from a number of sources including my own conversations with fans, Lebowski Fest and press reports, and testimonials and pictures across print and visual media. This fandom involves other demographics, but white men were in the vanguard and continue to strongly represent its constituency. I must add that members of the white male demographic, like any other identity category, are neither homogeneous nor do they necessarily share identical motivations as viewers. Yet trends within this kind of fandom are worth considering as they promote reflection on a mode of gendered participation often taken for granted in cult film studies – 'invisible' yet 'dominant' in the discourse. See Richard Dyer, *White* (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 3.

(related to alcohol and drug consumption) not often addressed in scholarly accounts of participatory audiences.

The Big Lebowski concerns the exploits of Jeffrey Lebowski (Jeff Bridges), a character who prefers to be called 'the Dude'. At the outset, thieves mistake the Dude, a one-time hippie activist now living in a contented state of unemployment, for another Jeffrey Lebowski, a wealthy estate owner (David Huddleston). The Dude insists that he is not the Lebowski they seek, but they attack him anyway and pee on his rug. The quest to find restitution for the rug leads the Dude to the rich 'Big' Lebowski, who enlists him to locate his apparently kidnapped trophy wife Bunny (Tara Reid). This job catapults him into a series of picaresque adventures, during which he meets, among others, Maude Lebowski (Julianne Moore), a free-thinking artist and daughter of the Big Lebowski, and a trio of German nihilists (including Peter Stormare). Between the Dude's brushes with such characters, he bowls with friends Donny (Steve Buscemi) and Walter (John Goodman), the latter an ex-Vietnam vet who helps the Dude to play gumshoe. Throughout the film, the Dude smokes dope, drinks White Russians, hallucinates (sometimes in the style of Busby Berkeley's musical numbers) when knocked unconscious and, along with others, makes prolific use of the word 'fuck' (figures 1 and 2).

The filmmakers' reputation, their revision of Raymond Chandler's noir universe, and the film's star cast were not enough to keep *The Big Lebowski*'s theatrical premiere from being a letdown, but it thereafter gained a significant second life. It appeared in staggered rereleases in the US home market, including reissues on laser disc and DVD in 1998, on VHS and DVD in 1999, and on cable and satellite channel USA beginning in 2000. Showings on cable and satellite channel Comedy Central followed, as well as a 2002 DVD and a 2003 DVD two-pack of *The Big Lebowski* and *Half-Baked* (Tamra Davis, 1998), a stoner film



Fig. 1. The Dude (Jeff Bridges), Walter (John Goodman) and Donnie (Steve Buscemi) at the bowling alley. All images from *The Big Lebowski* (Joel and Ethan Coen, 1998).

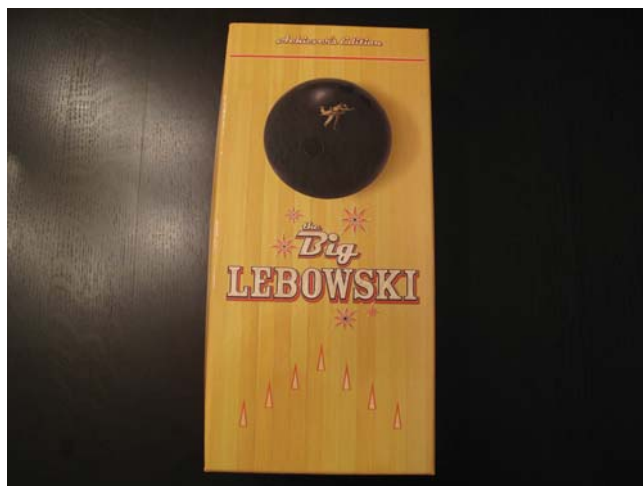
Fig. 2. After his drink is drugged, the Dude has a Berkeley-esque 'dream' with Maude (Julianne Moore) in full Viking regalia and women with bowling-pin headpieces.



starring Dave Chappelle. In 2005 the industry produced yet more DVD versions, including a special Collector's Edition, a Coen Brothers Collection and an Achiever's Edition. By this time the film's cult standing was having a noticeable impact on strategies of reissue. While in 2003 the DVD's back cover emphasized its comedic aspects, two years later Universal exploited the film's cult appeal by distributing it through labels aimed at devotees: the aforementioned Achiever's Edition, named for fans that refer to themselves as Achievers after a running gag in the film, and the Collector's Edition, which along with its 'all-new digitally remastered picture' and 'special features' explicitly referred to the film as 'the Coen brothers' irreverent cult hit' (figure 3).

The Big Lebowski has continued to play on television, including on film channels Showtime and Encore. In 2007 it appeared in the

Fig. 3. The 2005 DVD Achiever's Edition boxed set.



short-lived format HD-DVD, and 2008 saw the release of its Tenth Anniversary Edition and Tenth Anniversary Limited Edition on DVD, the latter presented in a faux bowling ball. At the time of writing, the film still awaits Blu-ray release. In terms of legal distribution online, the film is available from services such as Amazon Video on Demand, while clips can be viewed on sites such as Hulu.com. On other repurposing fronts, the film has spawned a merchandise industry with diverse items for sale, including the soundtrack, action figures, bowling shirts, 'Lebowski for President' T-shirts, posters, and bowling games designed for mobile phone download.

During *The Big Lebowski*'s persistent rerelease history it amassed 'an obsessive following' that catapulted it to the 'high table of classic cult films'.¹⁵ Although the film attracts viewers outside of this demographic, white men have been largely responsible for its surprise popularity in reissue. According to press reports, these *Lebowski* fans come from different walks of life: 'druggies' and 'non-druggies', students and academics, rock band musicians, sports figures, journalists, businessmen, Vietnam veterans, military personnel and unemployed 'real-life Dudes'. For example, legendary skateboarder Tony Hawk and friends have frequented bowling alleys after competitions to bowl and drink White Russians, 'tossing out references all the way'.¹⁶ As a criterion of rejection or acceptance, a Wall Street professional has referred to lines from the film while conducting job interviews to see if the interviewee 'gets' the quotation, while a military base commander has reported that he and his men 'watch the movie down in the missile silo two or three times a week'.¹⁷

As hundreds of user comments from The Internet Movie Database reveal, the fandom has gone global, with contingents in Australia and numerous European countries. In Poland, where the film was shown repeatedly on cable TV, bowling alleys sprang up across the nation's cities: Fantasy Park in Krakow, for instance, advertises its bowling alley as a place 'where you can kick back and emulate the skills of the venerable Dude from *The Big Lebowski*'.¹⁸ In Dresden, Germany, The Lebowski-Bar displays a mural of the film's characters and screens the film on an almost continuous loop. Beyond providing evidence of the film's international appeal, such tributes are an indication of how its popularity is manifested in everyday life and how indebted this popularity is, in turn, to the circularity and permeability of private and public realms that replay culture has inspired.

Like the *Star Trek* franchise, the Coens' film has also generated a fan convention and a documentary about its fandom: *The Achievers: the Story of Lebowski Fans* (Dennis Chung, 2009). In fact chronicles of the Lebowski Fest's founding often serve as the origin story of the film's evolution and recognition as cult. In 2002 Will Russell and Scott Shuffitt, men in their late twenties and early thirties at the time, attended a tattoo convention to sell T-shirts. During slow periods they quoted dialogue from *The Big Lebowski* to each other, and soon the other

¹⁵ David Edelstein, 'You're entering a world of Lebowski', *New York Times*, 8 August 2004, p. 21; Clark Collis, 'The Dude & I', *Entertainment Weekly*, 21 March 2008, p. 34.

¹⁶ Palopoli, 'The last cult picture show'.

¹⁷ Edelstein, 'You're entering a world of Lebowski', p. 21.

¹⁸ 'Fantasy Park', *Cracow-Life*. <http://www.cracow-life.com/play/entertainment_details/38-Fantasy_Park> [accessed 1 March 2008].

concessionaires joined in. After this exchange the two men started to think that if a convention could attract tattoo enthusiasts, surely a gathering could be held to celebrate their favourite film. That same year they organized the first Lebowski Fest, held in Louisville, Kentucky with 150 people in attendance. The Fest became an annual event and acquired a website, Lebowskifest.com. With Louisville as the organization's world headquarters, sell-out conventions drawing thousands of fans have spread across cities and nations from Seattle to Edinburgh.

At the Fests, typically held in bowling alleys, fans 'spend hours reciting dialogue, inveighing against each other's Dudeness, and indulging in activities favoured by the film's protagonists'.¹⁹ Besides bowling and drinking White Russians, attendees dress up as characters or objects – central and incidental – from the film. They may appear as the Dude or Walter, in Viking attire like that worn by Maude in one of the Dude's 'dreams', or as bowling pins. Special guest stars (for example, Bridges), contests and sales of paraphernalia such as T-shirts also contribute to the convention's festivities. In 2006 the event gained academic recognition, when the University of Louisville's English Department hosted a symposium on the Lebowski cult (followed by the fifth annual Lebowski Fest) that resulted in the publication of the conference proceedings (figure 4).²⁰

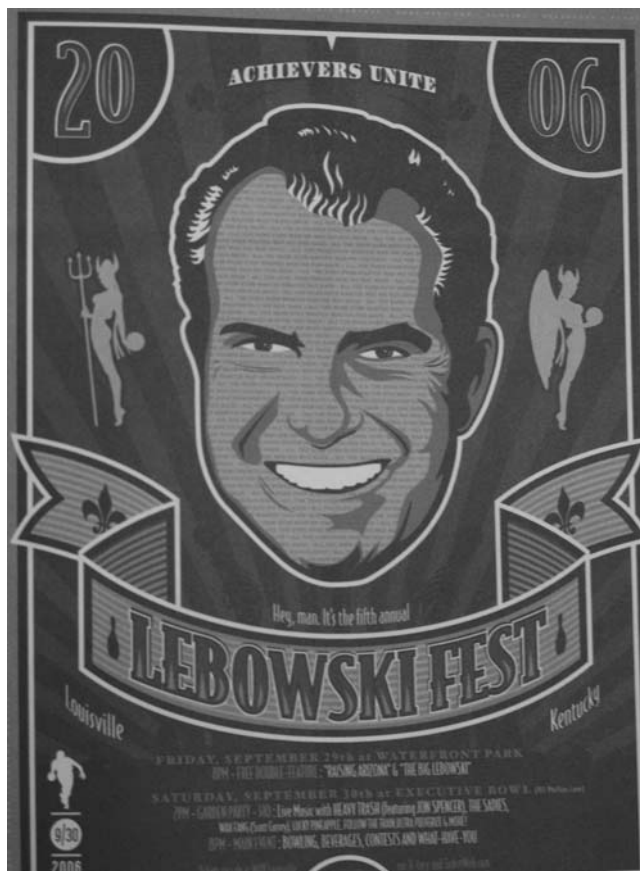
Publicly *The Big Lebowski* has also been exhibited in the classic cult forum of the midnight movie. Repertory and first-run theatres, film festivals, The Lebowski Fest, and other venues have screened the film at the witching hour. With the film's Los Angeles roots and regional appeal, it is not surprising that in 2000 the New Beverly Cinema, an LA revival theatre, held one of the first midnight shows; two years later Santa Cruz's historic Nickelodeon Theatre followed suit. *The Big Lebowski* has continued to be programmed in midnight movie venues nationwide. Among other places, in 2007–08 it appeared at San Francisco's Clay Theatre, Milwaukee's Rosebud Cinema Drafthouse and New York City's Sunshine Cinema. As these showings suggest, the film is part of a sizable contemporary business in cult cinema. The Sunshine and Clay theatres, for example, are part of the Landmark Theatre chain, the largest exhibitor in the USA of independent cinema, Hollywood classics and foreign-language films. Landmark programmes *The Big Lebowski* in midnight series with titles such as, 'Landmark After Dark' and 'Cult Classics Attack'. To demonstrate their conversance with *Lebowski* fans, some theatres serve the Dude's trademark drink and invite viewers to bowl in the aisles.

Through this kind of cult branding, *The Big Lebowski* is associated with a broad range of films with which it might otherwise appear to have little in common. In 2008, for instance, the Clay Theatre's 'Landmark After Dark' series featured the film along with older cult titles such as *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* (Jim Sharman, 1975) and *A Boy and His Dog* (L.Q. Jones, 1975), and newer entries to the

19 Max Gross, 'Groupies gearing up for Louisville "Lebowski Fest"', *The Jewish Daily Forward*, 18 July 2003. <<http://www.forward.com/articles/7722/>> [accessed 15 November 2009].

20 Edward P. Comentale and Aaron Jaffe (eds), *The Year's Work in Lebowski Studies* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2009).

Fig. 4. The 2006 Lebowski Fest Poster, featuring former US President Richard Nixon (inspired by the framed picture of Nixon bowling that hangs in the Dude's house).



²¹ Gwenllian-Jones and Pearson (eds), *Cult Television*, p. xvi.

²² Julian Ayrs, 'The Big Lebowski ... fans storm theatre', *The Tattler*, 5 November 2007. <<http://ijulian.blogspot.com/2007/11/big-lebowski-fans-storm-theatre-time-for.html>> [accessed 15 November 2009].

canon such as *Scarface* and *Office Space* (Mike Judge, 1999). Despite diverse films and audiences, programming creates affinities under the banner of cult as a 'meta-genre that caters to intense, interpretative audience practices'.²¹ Midnight exhibition signals to viewers that these films will deliver the cult experience – the opportunity to participate in exceptional, collective, apparently outside-of-the-mainstream filmgoing. A blogger attending a 2007 midnight show at a Hollywood theatre's 'Insomniac Cinema' series, for example, reports that he could not recall ever 'encountering such a boisterous, rambunctious crowd of filmgoers ... *The Big Lebowski* topped the "Rocky Horror Show" for all-out enthusiasm'. He adds that the filmgoers, 'a very stoned crowd', had 'caught an infectious bug ... that compels them to return to each screening [and] scream out the dialogue amid a raucous round of wild guffaws'.²² The midnight show today recalls behaviours (cannabis-induced hilarity, ritual repeat viewing, interactive quotation) associated with its celebrated early period in the 1970s, while continuing to signify a type of film consumption meant for the hip, die-hard fan.

23 Gregory Waller, 'Midnight movies, 1980–1985: a market study', in J.P. Telotte (ed.), *The Cult Film Experience* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1991), p. 167.

24 On this point, see Mark Jancovich, 'Cult fictions: cult movies, subcultural capital and the production of cultural distinctions', *Cultural Studies*, vol. 16, no. 2 (2002), pp. 306–22.

25 This and other fan comments from <<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0118715/usercomments>> [accessed 15 June 2005].

26 Manohla Dargis, 'Coens ask the C.I.A. for a license to laugh', *New York Times*, 12 September 2008, B13; Guy Raz, 'In character: The Dude, a Little Lebowski, alive in all of us', *All Things Considered*, National Public Radio, tx. 25 May 2008.

There are, however, differences between the periods. As Gregory Waller observes in his study of midnight movie exhibition in the 1980s, a mere decade after its glory days, a once 'idiosyncratic, ghettoized, alternative form of exhibition' became 'a commonplace, national, industrywide trend'.²³ Similarly, today 'midnight madness' is an institution of exhibition. Multiplexes and other sites programme such screenings to trade off of cult's alternative reputation and thus project its cachet onto first and ancillary runs of films that stretch from the most obscure titles to mammoth blockbusters. Theatre distributors and exhibitors are busy packaging and selling films as cult pleasures to specialized, though not necessarily fringe, audiences. The midnight venue still signifies distinction, bestowing the quality on films, fans and taste formations that circulate in its sphere. Such claims of distinction are, however, a commonplace of contemporary niche marketing and a standard component of cult fan aesthetics.²⁴

Of course a large part of *The Big Lebowski*'s circulation as cult has occurred in fan-driven, ad hoc everyday forums. Some viewers celebrate birthdays by having mini-Lebowski fests, at which they show the film alongside other kinds of revelry at home, or stage the event at a bowling alley. At times, the film itself is cause for a fete. As one fan writes: 'This movie defined my college years, as people had "Lebowski parties" with White Russians, etc. and the movie going the whole time. People could not stop re-watching this movie.'²⁵ Furthermore, YouTube features numerous commemorations, including remixes (such as '*The Big Lebowski*-F_cking Short Version', composed only of moments where the characters say 'fuck'), fan performances of scenes (such as 'Re-enactment – *The Big Lebowski*'), and parodies (such as 'Spongebob Lebowski'). These various testimonials demonstrate that, beyond the formal settings of fan conventions and midnight movies, viewing communities routinely interject the film into public and private festivities.

As my account of major aspects of *The Big Lebowski*'s ancillary circulation indicates, the film has appeared in diverse venues. Here producers and consumers have engaged in repurposing, through theatrical reissue to reenactment internet videos, and contributed to a multifaceted, immersive world of replay. In the course of reappearing in heterogeneous contexts of exhibition and reception, the film became a cult success. While few critics saw its cult potential during its original theatrical run, when it was considered at best a minor Coen brothers' work, as we have seen, by 2005 DVD special editions openly marketed it as a cult hit. Its increased visibility and status also led to critical reappraisal: for example a *New York Times* reviewer referred to it as the Coens' 'finest film' and National Public Radio enshrined the Dude as an 'indelible American character' along with Willy Loman, Scarlett O'Hara and Bugs Bunny.²⁶

Certainly, the New Beverly Cinema's programming of the film as a midnight movie in 2000 is a formative moment in its classification as

27 Bill Green, Ben Peskoe, Will Russell and Scott Shuffitt, *I'm a Lebowski, You're a Lebowski* (New York, NY: Bloomsbury, 2007), pp. 129–30.

28 For more on movie quotation, see my 'Say it again, Sam: movie quotation, performance and masculinity', *Particip@tions: Journal of Audience and Reception Studies*, vol. 5, no. 2 (2008). <http://www.participations.org/Volume%205/Issue%202/5_02_klinger.htm> [accessed 15 November 2009].

cult. Fans attending this and the later Nickelodeon Theatre's packed screenings recall that these shows were the first time that they knew they were not alone in their reverence; they also saw that the film elicited collective viewing behaviours linked to cult cinema (with audience members shouting out lines from the film even before it began).²⁷ The fact that attendees quoted knowledgeably from the film suggests that the seeds of its cult status had already begun to be sown by reissues in home markets in the late 1990s and early 2000s.

Through such venues as DVD and cable TV, many fans gained their first opportunity to reappraise the film and engage in activities, such as memorizing dialogue, linked to its becoming cult. *The Big Lebowski's* evolution as cult has intimately involved home replay, as it shaped the film's consumption. Nevertheless, in an era of media replay, when film identities are subject to a liquid transit between multiple exhibition sites and viewing modalities, early home viewing is not so much a single point of origin for cult identity as a potent contributor to its collective realization. Domestic replay thus warrants attention as an influential mechanism of cult.²⁸

The Internet Movie Database user comments, for instance, describe how the aftermarket furnished critical opportunities for reassessing *The Big Lebowski*. A fan from Poland writes that 'The film really didn't seem interesting after the first viewing, but when I saw it a second, third time (via repeats on cable TV), everything changed. [I found] brilliant dialogue . . . favorite lines, hidden comic situations that one must really see the film a few times to notice.' A US fan adds in more detail:

Like many other lovers of *The Big Lebowski*, I was baffled by the movie, didn't care for it at all that much (in the theater), and didn't realize what a fantastic work it was until I watched it again late one night on USA network. . . . Despite the edits and commercial interruptions, everything fell into place and I rented it again and again . . . each time finding something new and wonderfully funny. I now own it on DVD and watch it once a month. And it gets funnier each time.

Beyond revealing domestic replay's importance to *The Big Lebowski's* change in aesthetic fortune, these narratives of rediscovery identify repeat screenings as significant sources of pleasure. Repetition, as it calls attention to previously unseen elements, lends the film a coherence and a dimensionality found lacking in the first encounter. In addition, familiarity and discovery afford distinct yet intermingled forms of enjoyment – the former provides pleasure in the known, the latter in the new. The dance between these two dynamics produces a cornerstone of committed fandom in general. For *Lebowski* fans, this dance reveals the inexhaustibility of the film's comedy, as re-viewing discloses already recognized and freshly exposed layers of humour. Since viewers can rewatch the film at will, they are also able to memorize its dialogue and other features – a core aspect of cult fandom (as the 'Memorable Quotes'

29 Associated Press, 'A cult is born: fans flock to "The Big Lebowski" festival', 22 July 2003. <http://www.lawrence.com/news/2003/jul/22/a_cult/?more_like_this> [accessed 20 November 2009].

section for *The Big Lebowski* on IMDb.com attests). As some viewers argue that the film 'has a rewatchability that most other films don't',²⁹ 'replay worthiness' becomes a canonizing trait that rescues a once disparaged film from neglect and provides the conditions for its cult appropriation.

The fan commentaries above also furnish other, more subtle, clues about film consumption in the aftermarket. *The Big Lebowski's* disappointing premiere nonetheless laid the groundwork for subsequent encounters by supplying the semblance of recognition that would become eye-catching on television. With round-the-clock schedules, cable and satellite programming offer increased odds of what perhaps appears to the viewer to be a 'chance meeting', such as the one had by the late-night watcher of the USA channel. In the vast world of multichannel television, prior acquaintance with a film can act as a kind of spectatorial glue, leading channel-surfing viewers to stop and rewatch the film's remaining minutes and, possibly, enter into reevaluation.

Whether encounters with a film are intentional or accidental, fan comments indicate that reengagement precipitates a domino effect, with experience in one ancillary format motivating a search for the film in other formats – the repurposer's dream. For example, those who saw *The Big Lebowski* on Comedy Central or USA viewed a print that was heavily edited for language. One frequent change concerns a scene in which Walter goes on the rampage, destroying a new red Corvette with a crowbar. In unedited prints, while bashing the car he repeatedly cries, 'This is what happens when you fuck a stranger in the ass'. In edited versions, the line morphs into, 'This is what happens when you fight a stranger in the Alps'.³⁰ (figures 5 and 6).

Lamenting the violence done to the original print, a critic would dismiss this cut outright. Yet, *The Big Lebowski's* censored print has been integral to its reception. On the one hand, it offers its own pleasures.

30 'Preposterous TV Censorship: Fight a Stranger in the Alps', YouTube. <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LCcKBcZzGdA>> [accessed 20 November 2009].



Fig. 5. 'This is what happens ...

31 'This is what happens when you find a stranger in the Alps', *ClubIGN*, 13 April 2006. <<http://blogs.ign.com/Hil-IGN/2006/04/13/11592/>> [accessed 15 November 2009]. Fans differ on whether they think Walter is actually saying 'find' or 'fight' in this line.

Some fans regard the censored cablecast as heightening the film's comic appeal: as one writes, 'I was flipping channels . . . and came across a basic cable run of *The Big Lebowski*. I love this film *even more* on cable than DVD, because it has some of the worst curse-word re-dubs of all time.'³¹ Here, changes like 'when you fight a stranger in the Alps' are humorous because the ham-fistedness of the attempt to mask profane language sends up the broadcast censor, while mismatched dialogue produces the campy effects characteristic of dubbed films more generally. Film wreckage, then, can be deeply amusing. On the other hand, because of the censored print's limitations, viewers engage in repurposing. Just as radio play of a song's 'clean' rendition leads some listeners to look for the unedited parental advisory track, the expurgated cablecast entices viewers to rent or buy a DVD to access the R-rated version. Fan testimonials further suggest that what starts as a linear domino effect may become a 'ping-pong' effect, with viewers tacking back and forth between versions to experience them all. The search for authenticity – the film's truest, most complete form – still motivates viewers; however, in the viral milieu of contemporary rerelease and reception, it is not always the most urgent consideration.

As it promotes repeat viewing, rediscovery and reappraisal, and enables access to a film's multiple versions, home replay culture thus furnishes an infrastructure in which cult identities take root and blossom. At the same time, internet commentary builds an informal collective of fans who share their narratives of discovery and reasons for loving *The Big Lebowski*. A closer look at the film's recycling in the home market reveals yet other aspects of this sphere's role in developing cult fan bases and taste formations.

Although other significant demographics purchase DVDs, studio executives have remarked that 'DVDs are a man's world', with men comprising the main audience for films that do particularly well in this



Fig. 6 . . .when you fuck a stranger in the ass.'

32 David D. Kirkpatrick, 'Action-hungry DVD fans sway Hollywood', *New York Times*, 17 August 2003, pp. 1, 15.

33 Sharon Waxman, 'Studios rush to cash in on DVD Boom', *New York Times*, 20 April 2004, p. B8; Marc Gunther, 'Fox the day after tomorrow', *Fortune Magazine*, 14 May 2006. <http://money.cnn.com/magazines/fortune/fortune_archive/2006/05/29/8378000/index.htm> [accessed 15 November 2009].

format. One such group of films, the 'sophomoric comedy', as one critic dubs it, focuses on regressive male characters and adolescent humour.³² Films in this category that have done extraordinarily well on DVD include *Office Space* and *Old School* (Todd Phillips, 2003) – respectively, a satire of corporate life and a story of men in their thirties who start a fraternity. The former made \$11 million theatrically but proceeded to earn more than \$40 million on DVD, while the latter took in \$143 million on DVD as compared to its \$73 million box-office earnings.³³ The success of these films, like that of *The Big Lebowski*, signals the presence of a large male constituency crucial to DVD's success. Further, the canonical presence in home markets of such titles suggests an interesting alchemy between cinema, television and the internet with respect to male audiences.

Cable and satellite TV, often overshadowed by DVD in scholarly discussions of contemporary film exhibition, are significant arbiters of film taste and driving forces behind creating film fandoms. Two of the channels that programmed *The Big Lebowski*, USA (owned by NBC Universal) and Comedy Central (owned by Viacom), each have almost a hundred million subscribers. Of course not all of their programming is film content; yet they represent potentially formidable film exhibition windows, given their capacity to capture eyeballs and, via reruns, yield repeat viewings. In addition to home video reissues, male-oriented comedies have built audiences through numerous screenings on channels like these. Comedy Central provides a particularly apt case of a demographically specific locus for film circulation in the aftermarket.

Comedy Central has offered such fare as *South Park*, *The Daily Show*, *The Dave Chappelle Show* and *The Man Show*, generally attracting a demographic that is 64% male and 36% female, with a median age of thirty. The channel is also the number-one network in primetime among men aged eighteen to thirty-four and number two among men aged



Fig. 7. Surreal humour: the marmot lands in the Dude's bathtub ...

- 34 Alec Foge, 'Searching for the elusive male', *Mediaweek*, 5 September 2005. <<http://www.aef.com/industry/news/data/2005/3149>> [accessed 20 November 2009]; and 'Comedy Central cable TV advertising', *Time Warner Cable Media Sales* 2007. <<http://www.cablemediasales.com/pages/nets/?cp=nets&sp=info&net=comdy>> [accessed 12 September 2008].
- 35 Mark Hefflinger, 'MTV creates new unit for adult-directed, male-skewing brands', *Digital Media Wire*, 8 December 2006. <<http://www.dmwmedia.com/news/2006/12/08/mtv-creates-new-unit-for-adult-directed-male-skewing-brands>> [accessed 15 November 2009].
- 36 Foge, 'Searching for the elusive male'; and Paul Brownfield, 'Comedy Central rolls out plans for life beyond "South Park"', *Los Angeles Times*, 11 June 1999. <<http://articles.latimes.com/1999/jun11/entertainment/ca-45240>> [accessed 21 September 2008].

eighteen to twenty-four, particularly those with high incomes and internet access.³⁴ These facts drive programming decisions that lean towards 'adult-directed and male-skewing brands'.³⁵ Comedy Central has tried to attract different audiences, but as one of its executives remarks, 'young men have always been at the heart of our demographic . . . they're a barometer for us of what will be a successful show'. While not all viewers of the channel are Caucasian men, its niche audience is characterized as 'white males who, despite their real-life jobs, are still feeling nostalgia for the frat house'.³⁶ The channel's 'all comedy, all the time' format, built-in male audiences, and online selling of films such as *Office Space*, *Old School* and *The Big Lebowski*, thus affect the terms in which these films have circulated. *The Big Lebowski*'s recycling here relates it to a type of male-oriented comedy and recruits or strengthens a male fan base, thus helping to shape its appropriation.

As cult is a metagenre that can encompass a spectrum of film genres, replay culture, as it incessantly circulates cult, reveals the significance of these 'subgenres' to circulation and consumption. Just as the midnight movie, via programming that associates *The Big Lebowski* with *Rocky Horror*, defines the film overtly as cult, Comedy Central situates the Coens' title in relation to media that emphasize other generic affinities frequently allied with cult, namely 'slacker' and 'stoner' variants of comedy. Showing *The Big Lebowski* in the company of *Office Space* and *Old School* helps to classify it as part of the slacker oeuvre, one that features male characters repudiating the work ethic in various ways. Given the Dude's happy state of unemployment and lifestyle focused on bowling with the boys, the Coens' film falls easily into this category. With its former connection to Chappelle, Comedy Central has also featured his film *Half Baked* and sold it online. A DVD two-pack of both films suggests that the Coens' title is kin to the stoner comedy, another kind of male-oriented farce often fused with the slacker film (such as



Fig. 8. . . . and chaos ensues.

Harold & Kumar Go to White Castle [Danny Leiner, 2004]). As their name indicates, stoner films feature drug use and/or drinking; they may also include 'trippy' imagery. *The Big Lebowski*'s links to the stoner film are forged from the Dude's frequent consumption of marijuana and White Russians, hallucinations, and bizarre happenings (for example, as he takes a bath and peacefully smokes grass, German nihilists break down the door and toss a marmot into the tub [figures 7 and 8]). Fans often cite dialogue that helps secure the film's place in the stoner/slacker canon (Maude: 'What do you do for recreation?' The Dude: 'Oh, the usual. Bowl, drive around, the occasional acid flashback'). These colloquial genres, in turn, have popular cinematic forebears that give them deeper cultural foundations, from 'head-trip' fare such as *2001: a Space Odyssey* (Stanley Kubrick, 1968) and dope-smoking and drinking films such as *Up in Smoke* (Lou Adler, 1978), *Dazed and Confused* (Richard Linklater, 1993) and Kevin Smith's and Adam Sandler's early slacker films.

The Internet Movie Database message boards indicate that *The Big Lebowski* has attracted a fan contingent in the West based on its stoner/slacker credentials, suggesting that these forms of comedy have a measure of international recognition. A UK fan writes, for example, that he finds 'the whole lazy slacker guru who sits around bowling with his buddies while drinking cocktails really appealing'. Another in Australia reports that when watching, he wants 'to grab a glass, pour Kahlua, add milk, and have a slacking good time with the convolutedly and trashy experiences of the odd character "heroes" of L.A.', while a New York viewer comments that the film 'is funny, fluffy, and goes down well with a mind-altering substance of your choice'. A London viewer remarks that fans often play drinking games while watching, 'matching the characters shot for shot with White Russians', a practice called 'The *Lebowski* Challenge' by US college students (figure 9).

Of course, *The Big Lebowski* is also identified with its filmmakers in exhibition strategies and fan commentaries. In a Coen brothers' DVD collection, the film joins *Blood Simple* (1984), *The Man Who Wasn't There* (2001) and *Intolerable Cruelty* (2003). Packaging it with the Coens' other works places it squarely in relation to their sensibilities and their penchant for riffing on noir, thus also emphasizing *The Big Lebowski*'s reflexive relation to this genre.³⁷ The DVD cover describes *The Big Lebowski* as a 'hilarious twisted comedy-thriller' that offers 'a visually unique and entertaining world from the creative minds of the Coen brothers'. It thus promotes the film on the merits of its darkly riveting yet funny storyline, funky artfulness and peerless vision.

Fans write appreciatively of the Coens' brilliance, the quality of their scripts, and their actors' performances. Fans' interpretations of directorial style, however, often vary from more academic readings. Critics J.M. Tyree and Ben Walters identify the Coens' films as marked by 'unexpected collage . . . absurd juxtaposition . . . an idiosyncratic approach to character, dialogue, and . . . technique'. They regard *The Big*

37 J.M. Tyree and Ben Walters discuss the film's play on noir conventions in *The Big Lebowski* (London: British Film Institute, 2007), pp. 40–62.

Fig. 9. One of the many White Russians or 'Caucasians', as the Dude refers to them, consumed during the course of the film.



38 Ibid., pp. 15–16, 38.

Lebowski as a 'movie of constantly shifting gears' where 'for the first time, incongruity becomes the [picture's] basic key'. Ultimately it is 'about pastiche', about sampling and remixing samples into surprising collages.³⁸ Fans, too, note the unpredictable juxtapositions, idiosyncrasies and random events; however, they see these postmodern elements through what we might call a vernacular mode of surrealism. A US viewer, for instance, admires the film's 'genius', because of its 'mastery of dialogue. . . . Nihilists, omnipresent White Russians, smoking a J in a stranger's house without permission, a dream sequence that rivals Madonna videos and a famous TV writer [living] in an Iron Lung in the '90s! Wow, you couldn't find all these things in 1000 movies combined and Joel and Ethan give them to us in one rousing adventure.' A fan in Mexico concurs: the film has 'got it all. German nihilists! Androgynous flamenco bowlers! Flying feminist avant-garde painter people! Furry little marmots in harnesses!' Such features represent both a major source of pleasure for enthusiasts and an idiomatic way of grasping the Coens' style as surrealist.

Though the film may seem a far cry from early twentieth-century surrealism, its apparently random narrative, bizarre characters and encounters, depictions of altered states of consciousness and taboo-breaking (in its free use of profanity and drugs) recall, in colloquial form, some of this aesthetic's basic elements. Aspects of the film disparaged in 1998 by the critics, one of whom accused the auteurs of 'simply throwing weirdness at the screen', are the very things that the fans value. The Coens' ability to infuse the film with 'weirdness' becomes a signature element of their style and reputation. In fact, some internet critics today hail the Coens as cult auteurs because of their 'quirky, stylish, bizarre, off-beat' films – a status that allies them with other luminaries in this category, such as Ed Wood and David Lynch.³⁹ Authorship itself, of course, has long been a locus of feverish adulation; in contemporary

39 Tim Dirks, 'Cult films', *AMC Filmsite*, 3 September 2009. <<http://www.filmsite.org/cultfilms2.html>> [accessed 15 November 2009].

40 R. Barton Palmer writes on the director's postmodern reputation in *Joel and Ethan Coen* (Urbana and Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2004).

41 Although I do not address this issue at length, the shifting terms by which the Coen brothers' authorial signature has circulated over time deserve more scrutiny. Their example also points more broadly to the impact of the 'auteur cult' now and in the past to film meaning and pleasure.

42 Collis, 'The Dude & I', p. 37.

43 Harry Benshoff, 'The short-lived life of the Hollywood LSD film', *The Velvet Light Trap*, no. 47 (2001), p. 32.

44 See, for example, *Booze Movies: the 100 Proof Film Guide*. <<http://www.boozemovies.com>> [accessed 8 December 2009]; John Hulme and Michael Wexler, *Baked Potatoes: a Pot Smoker's Guide to Film and Video* (New York, NY: Anchor Books, 1996).

45 Jeffrey Sconce, "'Trashing" the academy: taste, excess, and an emerging politics of cinematic style', *Screen*, vol. 36, no. 4 (1995), p. 375.

iterations the Coens' films have been embraced both through the postmodern arthouse⁴⁰ and the 'bizarre film' canon. However, their eccentricities as stylists and storytellers, understood through the lens of cult cinema, strongly define *The Big Lebowski*'s popular circulation and reception.⁴¹

In terms of genre and authorship, *The Big Lebowski* circulates through a number of generic variants and a particular construction of the Coens' reputation that help to establish and fortify the virtues of its 'off-the-wall' credentials. While replay culture can foreground different aspects of genre and authorship for different audiences (noir collections of the Coens' films for noir aficionados, for example), the film's cultish features have played a pivotal role in attracting its core audiences. These audiences, in turn, elicit consideration of a kind of participatory culture rarely discussed in fan studies. According to a 2003 *Lebowski* Fest attendee, the event attracted 'the drunkest people' he had ever seen 'outside of New Year's Eve in Dublin'.⁴² The fans that drink, smoke, bowl, quote, slack, swear and laugh during and after screenings appropriate the film in a highly engaged manner. Yet, their behaviour does not have the same redemptive value in academic contexts that other, ostensibly more creative, grassroots activities such as fan art and fiction have claimed.

Lebowski fandom presents a 'street-level' participatory culture that hides in plain sight; scholars know that such a culture exists but few approach it seriously, since it seems a quotidian and debased form of consumption. While the 'head trips' of 1960s viewers can be romanticized as early experiments with consciousness, what Harry Benshoff refers to as 'enhanced cinematic spectatorship',⁴³ remains a perhaps less enchanting but nonetheless key component of filmgoing today. With sources that classify films according to their alcohol or drug quotients⁴⁴ and fan commentary that champions these accompaniments to viewing, *Lebowski* fandom taps into a pervasive way of watching films that has long been a part of cinema's everyday life. Moreover, the film's success is due to viewers who are not minority audiences in North America. White male demographics are important not only to Hollywood's theatrical business but to the ranks of cult film fandom historically.⁴⁵ *The Big Lebowski* thus offers a view of the tastes of a contemporary iteration of this fandom, while also exposing how gender-based appeals are fueled in the aftermarket.

In sum, the environment of replay has informed the process by which *The Big Lebowski* became cult in numerous ways. Through repeat screenings after its theatrical premiere in such venues as cable TV, viewers reappraised the film, deeming it as highly replayable – a key element in developing cult film identities and fan sensibilities. We can now see that its replayability rested on more than discovering its many layers of humour; fans' desires to rewatch it were inspired by the spectacle of its surreal and 'random' events, vivid characters, profane and otherwise 'catchy' dialogue, and focus on drinking and drugs. Repeat

screenings provided the means by which audiences could memorize dialogue, while also spurring transmedia rentals and purchases, showing close ties between repurposing and avid fandoms. The film's sectarian appeal was further forged and disseminated by its appearance on sites linked to cult cinema (the midnight movie and the fan convention) and DVDs marketed to its cult base (the Achiever's Edition), as well as by press reports, fans' private festivities and internet commentary.

In the aftermarket, the film's reissue across media channels affected notions of genre and authorship, as well as fan demographics. The film's replay codified its status as cult, while incorporating comic subgenres that support this designation. Its identity as a cult film infused, particularly, with stoner and slacker film conventions has, in turn, informed a fandom's understanding of the Coen brothers' style as vernacular surrealism. Along with these connections, venues such as Comedy Central have shaped the film's appeal to white male viewers, who are important audiences for such fare and who are 'proud to be in this fraternity of Lebowski-ites'.⁴⁶ The film has elicited a fervent participatory culture, with fans expressing devotion through such activities as bowling, cosplay (costume roleplay), convention attendance, internet reenactments and partying. Each of the activities I have discussed enhances fans' interaction with the film and with one another, creating both an aesthetic and an alliance of identity-based taste.

Given the aftermarket's vitality, the contemporary Hollywood cult film is not a thing apart. Certain species of cult cinema are not discontinuous from dominant industry or social practices; instead they represent continuity with, even a shining realization of, the dynamics of media circulation today. In this sense, cult is a logical extension of replay culture: it achieves the kind of penetration into viewers' 'hearts and minds' that media convergence and multi-windowed distribution promote; cultish viewing, in turn, represents a particularly dedicated and insistent pursuit of media inspired by replay. At the same time, cult helps to drive replay culture, motivating both media industries to rerelease films and fans to generate events, testimonials and DIY productions that visibly enter into and influence the mix. Reflecting the complex dynamics of today's mediascape, cult is both a product and an engine of replay. Whatever its role, however, cult's mainstreaming, occasioned in part by the expansion of film's place in domestic settings, is of cardinal importance to contemporary media life.

With its white male fan base, the case of *The Big Lebowski* suggests further that cult is an exercise in taste with the power to signal and affirm gender, racial, generational and other identities that are not on the periphery but at the centre. Film exhibition in the aftermarket, as it targets certain populations, figures crucially in creating identity-based taste. Yet, replay culture's sheer reach – the diverse locales, occasions and audiences involved – means not only that cult often cannot be exclusively identified with marginal devotees, but that thriving groups of cult viewers exist beyond white male demographics. De Palma's

Scarface is a notable recent example of a film that has attained immense global popularity among black men, especially gangsta rappers and others invested in this sensibility, while *Titanic* (James Cameron, 1997) and *Twilight* (Catherine Hardwicke, 2008) are of substantial personal importance to teenage girls and young women. Moreover, while replay culture may promote loose coalitions of identity-based taste, its prolific nature ultimately guarantees that those coalitions will not be homogeneous; others outside of the core demographic (for example, female fans of *The Big Lebowski*) are sure to join the ranks of admirers.

The international circulation of Hollywood films as one type of cult cinema adds yet further layers to this phenomenon, at the very least because of the social specificity of global contexts and the different modes of replay culture that characterize them. Furthermore, unauthorized forms of circulation, such as piracy and underground markets, may enhance the cult status of texts in unexpected ways. Since aftermarket media and modes of consumption can differ so greatly in transnational contexts, beyond the fact of replay's common existence, we cannot universalize the mechanisms by which cult film status is achieved. Replay culture's role in creating cult films and audiences on the global stage thus awaits further research.

The aesthetics of pastiche in the work of Richard Linklater

MARY HARROD

Pastiche may be more fundamental to cinema today than at any other time in the medium's history. For Ingeborg Hoesterey its structures 'can be seen as constitutive of postmodern film'. It is, however, a notoriously slippery concept. Hoesterey rightly attributes this to its dual structural profile as either imitation of an existing text or hodgepodge of different elements, as well as to its overlap with numerous other aesthetic categories, including parody, travesty, adaptation, recycling and palimpsest.¹ It is also historically controversial. Fredric Jameson famously dubs pastiche 'blank parody', a reactionary 'speech in a dead language'; in cinema, he links it to the nostalgia film that allegedly attempts to 'lay siege' to the past.² There is, though, semantic slippage in Jameson's conflation of the nostalgia film and pastiche, for evocations of pastness imitate a period, or rather the perceived (artificial) style of that period, as opposed to a particular artistic style. The equation of so-called nostalgic art with cultural nostalgia, in the sense of longing for an irretrievable past, has in any case been problematized by Paul Grainge. Grainge points to the influence of other factors in determining the fashions for retro objects as stylistic markers in the present; for example when economic determinants prompt a television channel to opt for a season of reruns.³ In fact, Jameson himself nods towards the complexity of the question, before proceeding to ignore it, when he remarks that nostalgia is not 'an altogether satisfactory word' for the modernist fascination with past styles of architecture.⁴ Linda Hutcheon is prominent among theorists who have directly challenged Jameson's criticisms, arguing against distinguishing pastiche from parody and

¹ Ingeborg Hoesterey, *Pastiche: Cultural Memory in Art, Film, Literature* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 2001), pp. 46, 9–15.

² Fredric Jameson, 'Postmodernism, or the cultural logic of late capitalism', in Michael Hardt and Kathi Weeks (eds), *The Jameson Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), pp. 22, 204.

³ Paul Grainge, *Monochrome Memories: Story and Style in Retro America* (Westport CT and London: Praeger, 2002), p. 11.

⁴ Jameson, 'Postmodernism', p. 203.

5 Linda Hutcheon, *The Politics of Postmodernism* (New York, NY and London: Routledge, 1989), pp. 93–117.

6 Hoesterey, *Pastiche*, Richard Dyer, *Pastiche* (London: Routledge, 2007).

7 Dyer, *Pastiche*, p. 1.

8 *Ibid.*, p. 168.

9 Roland Barthes, 'The death of the author', in *Image, Music, Text*, ed. and trans. Stephen Heath (London: Fontana, 1977).

emphasizing both modes' playful and ironic possibilities for negotiating questions of cultural memory and historical meaning.⁵

Hoesterey's and Richard Dyer's recent studies of pastiche continue in the latter tradition, while differing slightly in their precise application of the term. While Hoesterey discusses pastiche in the sense of both direct imitation and broader stylistic melange (from the Italian *pasticcio*), Dyer tends to privilege the first meaning: pastiche as imitation of a more specific style or text.⁶ Referring to both theorists' formulations, the guiding principle in this enquiry will be to approach pastiche according to a sense of the mode's function and meaning. Without becoming an undifferentiated catalogue of intertextuality, it will therefore follow Hoesterey in extending on occasion to include discussion of those categories deemed to overlap semantically with pastiche – or features of the texts under consideration which might best be described as governed by the aesthetics of pastiche.

What Hoesterey's and Dyer's studies share, more importantly, is a focus on the potential for vitality and artistic progressiveness afforded by pastiche. Illustrating in detail the fact that dynamism is, if anything, even more fundamental to pastiche proper than to generalized nostalgia, both foreground the mode's very ostentation as constructed – hence Dyer describes it as 'a kind of imitation that you are meant to know is an imitation'.⁷ Dyer places great emphasis on the practice's long artistic lineage, rescuing it from over-identification with a perceived crisis of memory in the 1980s and 1990s, which is linked to postmodernism's questioning of previous modes of understanding reality and temporality and underlies Jameson's work. He also states that 'pastiche is compatible with the expression of feeling', and this claim will be taken up here in relation to the films of Richard Linklater.⁸ While the countercultural darling of US independent cinema's eclectic oeuvre, especially his animated films, most obviously betrays a concern with the status of the real, it also exemplifies clearly the rich and diverse possibilities of the (related) concept of pastiche. Approaching Linklater from this angle points to a way in which the mode can be particularly well suited to the expression of emotion.

It should be acknowledged that there is something ostensibly paradoxical about an auteurist study of a practice which, in referring to works by other authors, downplays the significance of the single creative vision. Indeed, rather than espousing any notion of the director as transcendental auteur, at times this analysis comes closer to a Barthesian relocation of the author in the reader, in the sense that pastiche is an act of interpretation.⁹ But at least for the purposes of the films examined in detail here, in view of Linklater's position outside mainstream Hollywood production, with the curtailment of creative control that system entails, and of the observable consistencies in his work, the approach taken nonetheless privileges his authorial input. This includes alluding to the director's statements about filmmaking, while recognizing that they themselves need to be considered critically. As references to

external events towards the conclusion of this essay reflect, the conception of the author embraced here falls finally between the empiricist and more theoretical positions, as a subject defined by a degree of unity but simultaneously contingent upon historical circumstance.

History in its broadest sense is a central preoccupation for Linklater. Two thirds of the way through his teen ensemble piece set in 1976, *Dazed and Confused*, one character informs another: 'It's like the every-other-decade theory y'know. The fifties were boring, the sixties rocked. The seventies, ohmigod, they obviously suck. I mean c'mon. Maybe the eighties will be radical, y'know.' Couched in typically Linklaterian self-analyzing rhetoric, this situating and understanding of the present in relation to previous generations acts as a mise-en-abyme of the functioning of the text itself, at least for aficionados of US cinema. For the deceptively loose architecture of this story of the last day of term at a Texan high school is actually constructed carefully upon foundations laid by the American teen (sub)genre as a whole, and by one of its most prominent films, George Lucas's *American Graffiti* (1973), in particular, in such a way that their relationship is one of pastiche.

Dyer has noted the similar parentage of straight genre works and pastiche in their imitation of other texts: the difference, he suggests, is that only with pastiche is this 'the point'.¹⁰ However, as his discussion of Westerns and film noir reflects, there is a degree of subjectivity involved in such a judgement, and the waters become especially muddled when it comes to genres defined by a high degree of homogeneity and therefore frequent reflexivity. Within the teenpic genre, *Dazed and Confused* figures among a relatively small group of prominent films sharing many features, principally of content. In fact, the presence in the film of eight of the nine characteristics Robin Wood has identified with the 1990s high school movie cycle (the theme of sex; the lack of focus on education, familial situations, politics or class; the relatively equal presence of both genders; and, interestingly, the exclusion of racial and sexual minorities), in conjunction with the absence of a dramatic storyline and the insistence through the dialogue on characters' awareness of their place in history, suggests that these features are beginning to carry a comparable weight to the action they are disclosing, and so becoming at least part of the point.¹¹

Where there is no question that referentiality goes beyond generic self-awareness to signalled imitation is in the echoes of *American Graffiti* that reverberate through the text. Not many films constitute as close a pastiche as Todd Haynes's homage to Douglas Sirk, *Far From Heaven* (2002), which Dyer selects for analysis. But here Lucas's influential debut haunts the action as persistently as the baby-boomer generation to which it played casts its shadow over the 'slacker' Generation X for which Linklater once appointed himself spokesperson.¹² Set over the same period of a single night, the last night of school, *Dazed and Confused* revisits and, on the whole, intensifies *American Graffiti*'s multistranded plot structure and pervasive sense of banality, via a community defined by cliques with little to occupy them but sporadic

¹⁰ Dyer, *Pastiche*, p. 35.

¹¹ Robin Wood, 'Party time, or can't hardly wait for that American Pie: Hollywood high school movies of the 90s', *CineAction!*, no. 58 (2002), pp. 4–10. The film only diverges from the model in the single (extratextual) feature of not being a literary adaptation.

¹² See Andrew Kopkind, 'Slacking toward Bethlehem', *Grand Street*, vol. 11, no. 4 (1993), p. 178.

13 Jon Savage, 'Boomers and busters', *Sight and Sound*, vol. 4, no. 7 (1994), p. 20.

14 Dyer, *Pastiche*, p. 59.

15 Jameson, 'Postmodernism', p. 203.

16 David R. Shumway, 'Rock'n'roll soundtracks and the production of nostalgia', *Cinema Journal*, vol. 38, no. 2 (1999), pp. 39–43.

17 Alice Sodowsky, Roland Sodowsky and Stephen White, 'The epic world of *American Graffiti*', *Journal of Popular Film*, vol. 4, no. 1 (1975), pp. 47–55.

mutual antagonism. In both cases a significant proportion of the action takes place in cars, as well as in the anonymous public locations identified with teenpics generally. More specific echoes include a scene of underaged purchase of alcohol; the end-of-year dance, or hop, also recalling 'Let's go to the hop' on *American Graffiti*'s classic rock'n'roll soundtrack; the presence of younger sibling characters amongst those about to graduate, providing a sense of generational continuity and exchange; calls of *shotgun*; and what one critic calls the 'explicit homage' to the character of John Milner represented by Matthew McConaughey's older, outsider figure in *Dazed and Confused*, Woodison.¹³ Nevertheless, in the same way that *American Graffiti*'s Debbie is likened to both Connie Stevens and Sandra D, there is also a visual link established between Woodison and another outsider character in the earlier film, Harrison Ford's Bob Falfa, through the stetson they both wear. Similarly, ginger-haired, slightly geeky Tony in the later film recalls Ron Howard's Steve from its predecessor, but their roles in the story are quite different. In personality, Steve in fact seems closer to Tony's friend Mike, with whom he shares anxieties about the future. This underlines the futility of attempting too direct a mapping: all that pastiche need do is imitate a remembered impression.

In view of Dyer's observation that 'pastiche facilitat[es] the experience of the imitated work', it is important to recall the significance of *American Graffiti* itself in order to understand the point of this pastiche.¹⁴ Not only can the film be seen as the progenitor of many subsequent American teenpics, it is also the very text that for Jameson inaugurated the new discourse he condemned.¹⁵ The issue concerns the alleged falsification (and, as the term *nostalgia* implies, idealization) of its 1963 setting, which, as David Shumway's discussion of the film's soundtrack has shown, is largely determined by the period's own attachment to the 1950s. In light of recent reappraisals of nostalgic art as a positive investment in the (constructed) meaning of pastness, it seems highly appropriate that a film interested in the impact of inherited culture should pastiche another that is itself constructed in full awareness of the inescapable legacy of the past: the American graffiti to which its title refers. This awareness is conveyed with more self-reflexivity than Jameson credits to the film. For example, just as Debbie was compared to figures from the silver screen, Milner is explicitly likened to James Dean, hero of the 1950s juvenile delinquency films that *American Graffiti* at times pastiches – hence, as Shumway notes, the reference to *Blackboard Jungle* (Richard Brooks, 1955) through the presence here of 'Rock Around the Clock', the song that opened and closed the earlier film.¹⁶ Milner is also linked to the past through his rejection of the music of the Beach Boys and rueful observation that rock'n'roll has been going downhill since Buddy Holly. Details like these contribute to the mythic qualities which Alice Sodowsky, Roland Sodowsky and Stephen White have identified with Lucas's film, and which are filtered through its later pastiche.¹⁷ This is reflected in press surrounding the release of *Dazed and*

¹⁸ See 'The September film that gets our A +', *Interview*, vol. 23, no. 9 (1993), pp. 110–13.

¹⁹ Steve Neale, 'Teenpics', in Pam Cook and Mieke Bernink (eds), *The Cinema Book*, 2nd edn. (London: British Film Institute, 1999), p. 218.

²⁰ Lesley Speed, 'The possibilities of roads not taken: intellect and utopia in the films of Richard Linklater', *Journal of Popular Film and Television*, vol. 35, no. 3 (2007), pp. 98–106; James Hay, "'You're tearing me apart!' The primal scene of teen films', *Cultural Studies*, no. 4 (1990), p. 336.

Confused that sought to identify Linklater's characters with types.¹⁸

Representations of youth across the generations enter into dialogue with one another in a hall-of-mirrors effect that makes each an avatar of a greater archetype, foregrounding the parallelism of teenpics' general fascination with the tension between individual and group identities and the workings of genre and pastiche.

In this vein, it should be noted that Linklater's own *The School of Rock* (2003), while technically more of a pre-teenpic, belongs, with *Dazed and Confused*, to the subcategory of school movies. *The School of Rock* could be seen as a kind of inverted pastiche of films like *Blackboard Jungle* and a whole tradition of films about juvenile delinquency and wildness shown by Steve Neale to stretch as far back as the 1920s and 1930s, here complemented by the affective properties of classic rock music.¹⁹ The inversion is in the reversal of roles between responsible, adult pedagogy and reckless students. On the other hand, as Lesley Speed has pointed out, this reversal is not conclusive, given rebellious individualist teacher Dewey's ultimate embrace of a parental role, notably towards an overweight child. (The same is true of the relationship between alcoholic baseball coach Morris Buttermaker and his motley team in *Bad News Bears* [Richard Linklater, 2005], which is not just a pastiche but a remake of an earlier film.) Speed argues convincingly that maintaining such flexibility between absolute values is crucial to Linklater's entire project; and, in regard to intertextuality, it is worth recalling James Hay's germane observations that the teenpic as a whole 'emerged out of, co-opted, parodied or resisted the preferred narrative practices of US film culture' and that the genre's intergenerational exchange itself helps to foster such ambivalences of meaning.²⁰

American Graffiti and *Dazed and Confused*, though, are further markedly bound together by central themes. One of these is the (un)reliability of memory, which will become a recurrent concern for Linklater. In the first film, Steve and Laurie have forgotten who asked whom out, and he discusses the possibility of making love before he goes to college so he has something 'to remember you by'. In the second, Jason London's Pink worries about the possibility that nostalgia may distort his memories of school: 'All I'm sayin' is, if I ever start referring to these as the best days of my life, remind me to kill myself'. A second shared theme is the characters' desire for immediate experience. In *American Graffiti* this possibility appears to be pitted against remaining in the past. Protagonists' fates appear at first glance to bear out a teacher's advice to Richard Dreyfuss's Curt that he must quit Modesto in order to experience life. In a structuring reversal of his and Curt's positions that is as close as this ensemble narrative comes to a trajectory of change, Steve's punishment for renegeing on his decision to leave town is to end up as an insurance agent. The later film flirts with a comparable opposition, when a character (Cynthia) condemns everything she has been taught as irrelevant to the present and decides, with her friends, to set out explicitly in search of 'good old, worthwhile, visceral

experience'. However, this binary polarity is in both cases undermined by other details within the narratives. In the first film, the suggestion that immediate experience may benefit Curt is complicated, for example, by the revelation that the Godlike figure of the radio DJ Wolfman Jack does not in fact broadcast his revered slot from all over the world but is confined to the humble local radio station. For his listeners, the narrative's protagonists, the illusion of being spoken to from around the globe has been as pleasurable as the real thing. In fact, an experience that is revealed to be doubly mediated – both by virtue of being a radio transmission and also through the sources and ingenuity Jack exploits to describe his imaginary adventures – has evoked a degree of excitement at least comparable to that which might have been elicited by the listeners actually travelling themselves. The fact that Wolfman Jack was a well known American DJ, but of the 1960s and 1970s, not the 1950s, suggests disdain for historical accuracy and again indicates the film's greater interest in retrospective inflection of bygone eras, or explicitly mediated over ostensibly more immediate contact with the past. Its ending proves equally ambiguous on the merits of red-blooded dynamism, for both John and Terry 'the Toad' end up dead, one in a car crash (presumably) at home, the other in Vietnam. By contrast, Curt's status as a writer in Canada, while apparently preferable to selling insurance, actually implies an existence more reflective than primarily vital. For Cynthia and her friends in *Dazed and Confused*, two decades later, 'visceral experience' finally presents itself, ironically, as a volley of punches to one of their number's faces.

All this begs the question of how exactly the category of *experience* may be understood, both in film viewing and beyond. Linklater has commented in interview on the way in which 'film infiltrates your nervous system' and 'watching a movie is an experience that lives on within you afterwards'.²¹ Akin to theories of embodied spectatorship in seeking to valorize cinema's connection to the sensorium rather than the psyche, the director's conception of the brain as first and foremost part of the body also lies behind what Speed has described as a utopian strain in his work, viewing postmodernity as a leveller which allows the intellectual to coexist with the experiential, both within and through his films and in terms of their positioning at the interface of art and more mainstream cinema.²² Moreover, the connection between memory and body underlines the impossibility of separating present from past. For while the way in which we experience the phenomenal world can be reduced to physical responses to external stimuli, such interactions are, simultaneously, always mediated by human perception. This is coloured – whether unconsciously or at the level of cognition – by previous experiences; and these include experiences of mediation itself, as in watching a film. In other words, all experience is always both immediate and, to varying degrees, mediated. Linklater's conscious imitation of Lucas communicates his awareness of living, as Dyer puts it, 'permanently, but without distress, within the limits and potentialities of

21 Gavin Smith, 'Lost in America', *Film Comment*, vol. 42, no. 4 (2006), p. 27.

22 On embodied spectatorship, see especially Vivian Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts: Embodiment and Moving Image Culture* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2004); Speed, 'The possibilities of roads'.

23 Dyer, *Pastiche*, p. 180.

24 Walter Benjamin, 'Theses on the philosophy of history', in *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn (London: Jonathan Cape, 1970), p. 263.

25 Benjamin, *The Writer of Modern Life: Essays on Charles Baudelaire* (Cambridge, MA and London: Belknap Press, 2006), p. 191; Tom Gunning, 'An aesthetic of astonishment: early film and the (in)credulous spectator', *Art and Text*, no. 34 (1989), pp. 31–45.

26 'Dazed and Confused: Criterion Collection', *PopMatters*: <<http://www.popmatters.com/pm/review/dazed-and-confused-criterion-collection-1993>> [accessed 20 November 2009]; Beard, quoted in John Walker (ed.), *Halliwel's Film and Video Guide 2002* (London: HarperCollins, 2002), p. 205.

27 Lesley Speed, 'Tuesday's gone: the nostalgic teen film', *Journal of Popular Film and Television*, vol. 26, no. 1 (1998), pp. 24–32.

28 Shumway, 'Rock'n'roll soundtracks', p. 41; Philip Drake, "'Mortgaged to music': new retro movies in 1990s Hollywood cinema', in Paul Grainge (ed.), *Memory and Popular Film* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), pp. 183–202.

the cultural construction of thought and feeling'.²³ If Benjamin called history 'time filled by the presence of the now', pastiche evokes the converse – that the present is always filled with the presence of the past.²⁴ His work on Proust underscores this same idea, again rooting it in sensory experience. The linkage of perception, memory and body suggests the way in which pastiche may cue affect, and the fact that awareness of an emotion's historical provenance and construction need not detract from its power. This realization is fundamental to Benjamin's well-known description of cinema as shock perception, later quoted by Tom Gunning in his equally influential assessment of early cinema's antirealist 'aesthetics of astonishment'.²⁵ By imitating a particular mood pastiche can recreate it, and consciousness of its past roots may, if anything, add a layer of nostalgia.

Such an understanding of the relationship between pastiche and nostalgia sheds light on the question of the affective qualities of *Dazed and Confused*, over which there has been some critical disagreement. For Chris Barsanti in his review for the Criterion DVD, the film 'makes you nostalgic for a time you never experienced', while for Steve Beard in *Empire Magazine* – perhaps thinking of Pink's warning to resist nostalgic rewriting of the past – it constitutes 'anti-nostalgia'.²⁶ Arguing the second case more fully, Speed highlights the lack of an adult perspective as evidence of the film's removal from the rites-of-passage paradigm and the absence of a nostalgic tone. Bringing a distanced, adult perspective can indeed heighten the irrevocable loss of nostalgia – an emotion that describes our relationship with the past. It is also true that this film's non-linear sense of temporality, with the present always lived to some extent in the shadow of the past, distances it from any kind of narrative of progress. However, *Dazed and Confused*'s pastiche of *American Graffiti* itself implies a removed authorial overview. Although this perspective appears less clearly authoritative than in the first film, whose coda relates characters' fates through onscreen text, it is nonetheless characterized by a degree of knowingness. In fact, this elusive authorial positioning might actually facilitate a nostalgic relation, for Speed notes the paradox of the way in which the nostalgic teenpic celebrates a past while at the same time definitively asserting a superior later perspective.²⁷ Additionally, the pastiche brings some of the nostalgic tone of Lucas's film to bear on this one. This is reinforced by another soundtrack reminiscent of the period depicted. Music, as sensory experience, is widely recognized to be markedly evocative of the past: Shumway, for example, referencing Proust, calls 'oldies' the 'tea-soaked madeleine of the masses', while Philip Drake has identified the role of music in 1970s retro featured specifically in American films of the 1990s.²⁸ *Dazed and Confused* may refuse to idealize 1970s adolescence, notably through an extensive focus on violent and humiliating intergenerational rituals that distances it from the innocence of its predecessor; it nonetheless holds a sense of the lost pastness of both the 1970s and the 1950s, and by extension the past as a whole, in tandem

with the broad stress on immediacy illustrated by *Speed*. The final shot of a group of friends taking to the open road high on freedom and possibility, but to the strains of Foghat's 1975 hit 'Slow Ride', is a perfect example of the marriage of these two non-contradictory impulses.

If the practices of intertextual echo, allusion and quotation do not in and of themselves constitute pastiche, what they share with it is their unabashed textual self-consciousness through, specifically, their signalling of a relationship with preexisting artefacts. Thus the overt parallelism between the governmental conspiracy theories of *Dazed and Confused*'s Slater and those expressed by several characters in Linklater's previous film *Slacker* (1991) adds to what Hoesterey has described as a 'pastiche flavour'.²⁹ In accordance with Linklater's belief that 'your most enduring relation is who you think you are to who you have been in the past', an aesthetic of self-pastiche is one of those that heavily informs his 2001 film *Waking Life*.³⁰ Starring *Dazed and Confused*'s Wiley Wiggins in a similarly passive role, floating – now literally – from one encounter to the next, the film reprises the Austin locations and meandering structure of *Slacker*, this time rendered by pioneering rotoscope animation technology and posited as a dream. Where *Slacker*'s mobile camera flitted from one character exchange to another haphazardly, this time the story mainly – but not always – follows Wiggins's unnamed dreamer in a series of similarly dialogue-led encounters, with the action, after being filmed, now transposed to animation.

One of these features Julie Delpy and Ethan Hawke, who starred as Céline and Jesse in Linklater's iconic slacker youth love story *Before Sunrise* (1995), now in bed together and reflecting, like the director, on past events. The appearance six years on of Céline and Jesse, well loved by the earlier film's considerable fanbase, as cartoon characters, is especially startling in view of the general feeling that, as Linklater has said in discussing those involved in the film, 'the characters continued to exist in some parallel universe' – an apprehension which no doubt influenced the decision to produce the sequel *Before Sunset* (2004), reuniting the same couple nine years after the original.³¹ It also raises the question of these films' own relation to the pastiche paradigm. On the face of it, they chime more immediately with a naturalistic sensibility than Linklater's other films. For Glen Norton, the 'seductive heart' of the earlier film lies in its most clearly improvised moment, when dialogue responds to the random result of a pinball game. In *Before Sunset*, the Parisian setting only foregrounds the eschewal of romantic clichés, thanks partly to an unobtrusive cinematographic style, typified by long, fluid shots and natural lighting, and the unfolding of the narrative in real time. However, contrary to Norton's assertion that unspontaneous language drives an unseductive wedge between Céline and Jesse, the films still occasionally embrace recycled conventions as a valid gesture towards meaningful communication between individuals. In the same way that each in fact contains numerous intertextual references of

29 Hoesterey, *Pastiche*, p. 54.

30 Smith, 'Lost in America', p. 27.

31 Amy Taubin, 'Nine years on, Richard Linklater reunites Ethan Hawke and Julie Delpy for another brief encounter in this miraculous real-time sequel to *Before Sunrise*', *Film Comment*, vol. 40, no. 3 (2004), p. 19.

varying degrees of explicitness – from the story of Dido and Aeneas evoked by Purcell's overture during the credits in the first, to Jacques Rivette's *Céline et Julie vont en bateau/Céline and Julie Go Boating* (1974) in the second – without these detracting from its emotive power, the poem given to the couple by a homeless man in *Before Sunrise*, though possibly, as Jesse suggests, prefabricated (and certainly a staged gesture), still moves at least one of them. Jesse may lament the fact that their conversations have been had by other couples before, but this does not prevent the version in which they appear here speaking volumes about the developing relationship between this particular pair. As Céline says, the importance, when it comes to communication, is all in the attempt. Furthermore, Norton himself argues that seduction lies in 'weak signs', or ambiguity, and it is precisely this that is perpetuated by allusion and pastiche.³² The effect of encountering these characters in *Waking Life* is to recreate something of the earlier film's whimsy, not to make any concrete statements.

In addition to such self-reference, many of *Waking Life*'s encounters involve intellectuals and thus the film also contains a medley of pastiches of academic discourse, from Marxist revolt to chaos theory, which is also evoked by the film's structure. On a few occasions their concentration and intensity lend them a satirical edge, such as in a pastiche of poststructuralist theory which states baldly that we are 'just structure to house abstractions'. At other times pastiche tips over into parody, emphasizing not similarity but that which stands out as inappropriate, as when one speaker earnestly attributes a lack of progress in human history not to politics but, bathetically, laziness. This may be a humorous reference to misconceptions about the 'slacker' ethos itself, reflecting Linklater's view that 'slackers might look like the left behinds of society, but they are actually one step ahead'.³³ Whatever the case, in this respect the film as a whole constitutes what Dyer has called a 'pasticcio of pastiches' and recalls one character from *Slacker*'s indictment of another as sounding 'like you've just pasted together bits and pieces from your authoritative sources'.³⁴

Because of the rich discursive histories into which the film taps, it is unrelentingly allusive in a way that goes beyond pastiche, and in fact may not always be intentional. For example, explicit reference to the idea of people as characters in someone else's dream strongly recalls Jorge Luis Borges's short story 'Las ruinas circulares'/'The circular ruins'.³⁵ The Argentine author is a favourite of those interested in the accumulation of meaning across texts, thanks to his work's thematization of the difficulty involved in getting away from the already said. This idea is summed up in a 1949 essay, in which he writes:

Perhaps we are mistaken to imagine we can invent metaphors. The true metaphors, those which create intimate connections between one image and another, have always existed; those which we may still invent are the false ones, those which it is not worth inventing.³⁶

³² Glen Norton, 'The seductive slack of *Before Sunrise*', *Post Script – Essays in Film and the Humanities*, vol. 19, no. 2 (1999–2000), pp. 62–72.

³³ Kopkind, 'Slacking toward Bethlehem', p. 178.

³⁴ Dyer, *Pastiche*, p. 126.

³⁵ Jorge Luis Borges, 'Las ruinas circulares', in *Ficciones* (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1997), pp. 56–65.

³⁶ Jorge Luis Borges, 'Nathaniel Hawthorne', in *Otras inquisiciones* (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1976), p. 83. My translation.

37 Hoesterey, *Pastiche*, pp. 54, 85. 'La biblioteca de babel' and 'Pierre Menard, autor del Quijote' appear in Borges, *Ficciones*, pp. 86–99, 41–55.

38 Kevin John Bazelka, 'An interview with Richard Linklater', *Velvet Light Trap*, no. 61 (2008), p. 51.

39 Dylan Trigg, *The Aesthetics of Decay: Nothingness, Nostalgia and the Absence of Reason* (New York, NY: Peter King Publishing, 2006), p. 55; Marc Augé, *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*, trans. John Howe (New York, NY and London: Verso, 1995), p. 21.

40 This is a paradox that has attracted considerable attention among film studies scholars over the past two decades, providing, for example, the subject of Steven Shaviro's study, *The Cinematic Body* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).

41 James Brown, 'A dream within a dream', *Metro*, no. 133 (2002), p. 156.

Thus in examining pastiche in Wim Wenders's *Der Himmel über Berlin/Wings of Desire* (1987), Hoesterey finds a literalization of Borges's Babel library. She also discusses the story 'Pierre Menard, autor del Quijote'/'Pierre Menard, author of the Quixote' in a section dedicated to literary pastiche.³⁷ And comments made by Linklater in a recent interview on Shakespeare and the history of shared or recycled narratives bear obvious comparison with Borgesian ideas of narrative expressed in 'Pierre Menard' and across his fictional and critical works.³⁸ Deliberate or not, the allusion to Borges in *Waking Life* highlights the commonality of both artists' ludic blurring of the boundary between life and dream. It is in such perturbation of perceptual categories that the close links between the two men's interest in pastiche and their wider philosophical questioning of the status of the real are vividly revealed. In *Waking Life*, not only does the action confound the dream and real worlds by having its protagonist repeatedly 'wake up' into another dream (not to mention its confusion of the diegetic and extratextual worlds, by featuring minor celebrities, including Linklater, apparently as themselves), dream and memory are also directly compared, for example when a character explains that neural processes can make recollections seem less 'real' than dreams. This coincides with Dylan Trigg's discussion of the processes of detachment which confer nostalgic value on memories, quoting Marc Augé's description of childhood reminiscences as 'vanished landscapes or faces we sometimes find again in our dreams'.³⁹ The comparison also makes textually explicit the point that the intensity of our experience of reality does not depend on cognitive knowledge of the ontological authenticity or immediacy of its source. In fact it goes one step further in showing that, while such experience is always ultimately grounded in the body, it need have little basis in the external world, mediated or otherwise.⁴⁰

Apprehension of the fact that scant regard for mimesis need not detract from affective potential allows Linklater to give free rein to stylistic virtuosity in the look of the film. Privileging transformation over straight imitation, rather than simply having all twenty-four frames copied, the director hired a team of animators to give different looks to different scenes, and even associated characters with specific colour schemes. The result is a blend of styles which the director describes as 'some more pop, some more like underground comics, others more impressionistic', occasionally including antirealist details such as question marks hovering in the air.⁴¹ Beyond *pasticcio* stylistic hybridization, however, there is also another sense in which the animated form of *Waking Life* can be seen to exploit pastiche. That is, the transformation of the filmed material into animation itself constitutes a kind of pastiche, this time of the underlying film. Pastiche as 'an imitation you are meant to know is an imitation' in fact perfectly describes the relationship of this animated artefact to the live-action film in whose image it was created. In this reading, the rotoscoping process itself is the sole source of the

deformation that is also one of the defining features of the pastiche relationship.⁴²

As indicated, rotoscoping is not the only detail distinguishing *Waking Life* from *Slacker*. However, an important feature shared by the two films is a generally light-hearted tone, again exemplifying Dyer's observations about pastiche recreating the experience of the imitated work. This is not to say *Waking Life*, in common with all Linklater's films, lacks moments of both unexpected anger and melancholy; a red-schemed scene in which a prisoner vows violent revenge upon his enemy stands out for its tonal disjunction. Less extreme is a scene, pastiching a similar one in *Slacker*, in which a man with a megaphone furiously calls the masses to revolt. This conveys fervour in the same kind of antiestablishment context in which the earlier film's conspiracy theories evolved and further proliferate here. Melancholy, meanwhile, is above all evoked through intermittent strains of violin and harmonica in the score. It is also occasionally linked to the narrative, such as when Delpy's character narrates her dream in which her 'waking life' was revealed, this time not as someone else's dream but as the memories of an old woman (echoing anxieties voiced by Céline in *Before Sunrise*) – in other words, as both unreal and lost forever. However, the failure of intense emotion to prevail overall can be explained in large measure by theories of narrative which have underlined the close relationship between readers' or audiences' affective engagement with characters and the establishment of consequentiality within a given text.⁴³ In other words, it is difficult to become highly emotionally involved with characters if there is little sense that events will have an effect on their future within the narrative. The episodic and discontinuous structure of both *Slacker* and especially *Waking Life* therefore detracts from the films' potential to move the audience through character engagement. Moreover, even the fate of the later film's protagonist – who provides the single unifying thread – is rendered unimportant by the knowledge that this is merely a dream. If chaos theory argues for the interconnection of seemingly independent events, the other side of the coin is the impossibility of relating happenings or acts directly to their consequences; and the final mood is, on balance, hopeful, as the dreamer floats off towards another adventure, far from exhausting what one critic has called the 'boundless possibility' of the film's 'mutating palette and delirious verbiage'.⁴⁴ It is in his subsequent animated film that Linklater more fully explores both the political implications of Hoesterey's reminder that 'discourses produce realities' and the melancholic possibilities of communicating this through pastiche.⁴⁵

So complex is the referential structure of *A Scanner Darkly* that one review suggests it 'evokes everything from film noir to the great paranoid thrillers of the 1970s'.⁴⁶ In regard to the first comparison, it has been pointed out that noir has always been linked to notions of pastness in the USA.⁴⁷ This relationship has frequently been conceived in terms of nostalgic commodification. However, just as the past has in Linklater's

43 These are particularly common in discussions of comedy; see for example Susan Purdie, *Comedy: the Mastery of Discourse* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993), pp. 77–80.

44 Justin Chang, 'Film reviews: Cannes: *A Scanner Darkly*', *Variety*, vol. 403, no. 2 (2006), p. 37.

45 Hoesterey, *Pastiche*, p. 5.

46 Peter Travers, 'Movies: *A Scanner Darkly*', *Rolling Stone*, nos 1004–1005 (2006), p. 126.

47 See for example James Naremore, *More Than Night: Film Noir in its Contexts* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998), p. 31.

48 These include a straight pastiche of *Metropolis* (Fritz Lang, 1927), which itself rewrote the Faust motif with which Jameson associates the origins of pastiche, in another hall of mirrors effect; a more complex 'visual semiotics', overlaying various referential codes in such a way that different scenes reference diverse narratives and archetypes; and a *pasticcio*-style, painterly set design. Hoesterey, *Pastiche*, pp. 47–51, citing Giuliano Bruno, 'Ramble City: postmodernism and *Bladerunner*', *October*, no. 41 (1987), pp. 61–74.

49 Jameson, 'Postmodernism', p. 202.

previous films defined the present in ways that transcend straightforward nostalgia, here events take place seven years in the future in a dystopian, unsentimentalized California that looks prosaically contemporary. The detective at the story's centre is Keanu Reeves's increasingly delusional drug addict Bob Arctor, struggling to determine not just good from bad but real from hallucination and self from other. Winona Ryder's manipulative Donna provides the femme fatale. The film's status as a Philip K. Dick adaptation means that, of all sci-fi noir, the spectre of the genre-defining and iconic *Blade Runner* (Ridley Scott, 1982) in particular hovers over it. Interestingly, Hoesterey identifies *Blade Runner* as the first text to have provoked discussion about cinematic pastiche and postmodernism, by Giuliana Bruno in an overtly Jamesonian critique. Hoesterey contests this reading, illustrating how various different types of pastiche work together in the film to challenge conventional notions of representation, in line with its existential philosophical concerns.⁴⁸ If there is little of *Blade Runner*'s neo-baroque eclecticism about the look of *A Scanner Darkly*, its animated aesthetics are equally well attuned to its narrative of the breakdown of distinction between reality and simulacrum.

In fact, the film's cast of overgrown slackers fooling around in a generic suburban house is more redolent of not only early Linklater but Generation X films in general. The presence of Ryder, often in a state of apparent apathy, is key to this, and particularly recalls *Reality Bites* (Ben Stiller, 1994), the film which alongside *Dazed and Confused* cemented the linkage of X art with 1970s retro and launched the image of Ethan Hawke as slacker antihero which Linklater would exploit in *Before Sunrise*. Stars, as numerous theorists have argued, work like genre in bringing expectations to bear on the film experience. As with genre, the extent to which this may be understood to function as pastiche depends on the exact balance of signification between these associations and the character's role in the film. The uncommon weight carried by the first of these is even more striking with Reeves's character, whose name is just one letter away from *Actor*. Several reviewers have commented on the relationship between the star's role as sacrificial hero here and in *The Matrix* (Andy and Larry Wachowski, 1999), itself a decidedly postmodern – and philosophically Dickian – text, in which Reeves's character actually bears the name that Jameson, by way of Henri Lefebvre, negatively associates with pastiche: Neo.⁴⁹ The parallels are further underlined by this film's exact stylistic imitation of *The Matrix*'s opening credits. Also relevant here is the real-life association of all the film's other well-known actors – Ryder, Robert Downey Jr and Woody Harrelson – with drug use. Performativity here becomes a defining trope. This is especially evident in Downey Jr's hyperarticulate, self-inventing James Barris. Additionally, while the teenagers of both *American Graffiti* (notably 'the Toad') and *Dazed and Confused* were predictably concerned with their image, for example seeking to appear older by

association with cars, the opposite sex and alcohol, here macho posturing is taken to new levels, as grown adults blatantly swagger and pose.

One instance of such posturing provides an example of pastiche moving into parody, contributing to the black comedy that punctuates the film. When a petty squabble escalates, Luckman's and Barris's hostile circling of each other is accompanied by a cymbal clash. Because these are usually associated with the majestically choreographed fight sequences of martial arts films, the effect is to heighten by contrast the tawdriness of this sad charade. Similarly, a tragicomic suicide attempt by advanced-stage addict Freck – played by Rory Cochrane who was last seen as *Dazed and Confused*'s stoner Slater, intertextuality thus contributing to the thematics of decline – is accompanied by a kind of mock-epic commentary. This is further undercut by the interweaving of humorously inappropriate details, such as the hallucinated figure of Judgement which materializes to read out a litany of masturbatory sins. Indeed, the incongruous tension between the cataclysmic tragedy of a society in which twenty per cent of the population is addicted to a death-inducing drug and the everyday triviality of much of the action is the primary source of the film's dark humour. This is strikingly evident in the conceptual (and in the second instance rhetorical) shifts effected by dialogical juxtapositions like Barris's matter-of-fact reflection that 'This is a world getting progressively worse, can we not agree on that? ... What's on the dessert menu?', or Arctor's sombre reflection that 'D is finally death, slow death', followed by Barris's 'Okay, lets eat'.

Further comedy is afforded by the fact that, in tune with the aesthetics of pastiche at the micro level, *A Scanner Darkly* self-consciously situates itself in a web of cultural references, both explicit (the likening of a situation to a Beatles song) and implicit (X film-style fast-paced, idiosyncratic dialogue, which makes reference to popular culture). This creates opportunities for humorous inflection of cultural perceptions. For example, Luckman's reference to the period 'before Leonardo hit his Elvis phase' is funny because it appeals to a common notion that pinup Di Caprio has a tendency to gain weight. The comment's darker edge is foregrounded by its context within a more generalized portrayal of degeneration. At the same time, because Harrelson is performing Harrelson as much as he is Luckman, his remark also contributes to a confusion of levels of 'reality', similar to that of *Waking Life*. Here, though, each layer is defined by cultural referents as one story is told, pastiche-fashion, through another. The resulting sense of pastiche's function as infinite deferral is underlined by Luckman's following discussion of impersonating not someone famous but their impersonator, the character played by Di Caprio in *Catch Me If You Can* (Steven Spielberg, 2002). There is a dizzying absurdity to this apprehension: as Judith Butler – arguing against Jameson – has observed, there can be humour in the revelation that the supposedly original 'normal' is merely a copy.⁵⁰

50 Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York, NY and London: Routledge, 1999), p. 176. By comparison, Dyer explicitly likens pastiche to both Butlerian performativity and Derridean deferral, in Dyer, *Pastiche*, p. 173.

With the concept of deferral in mind, the reading whereby animation functions as a pastiche of live action may be applied to this film more productively than to its animated predecessor. In contrast with *Waking Life*, all twenty-four frames were captured and a single team of animators was employed to draw over the film in a faithfully imitative mode. Notwithstanding the instability of shifting forms and occasional antirealist details – such as thought bubbles that recall Linklater’s likening of the film’s look to a graphic novel, which it also intermittently pastiches – the film ‘exploits the eeriness of the style’s mimesis’.⁵¹ Hoesterey has called film noir in colour already a hybrid; here the animation adds one more level of removal from cinematic convention (and, in turn, the proscenic event), making the actors’ roles more pastiche than mere performance of their star personae.⁵²

The deferral of reality through animation also complements and reinforces the melancholy that dominates the text as a whole, from the mournful violins over the opening credits to the final dedication to Philip K. Dick’s catalogue of friends lost to drugs, now remaining only – like the memories of *Blade Runner*’s replicants – ‘in my mind’. Regarding the tonal contrast with *Waking Life*, it is worth reiterating here that it is less the mimetic qualities of *A Scanner Darkly* themselves than the (nonetheless related) classical conception of characters, in terms of psychological depth and narrative causality, which facilitates the later film’s greater emotive impact. At times it is ostentatiously hypermediated, such as when the action ‘fast forwards’ or Arctor presses a button within the diegesis and the screen turns black. Linklater has in fact explicitly observed: ‘it’s not as simple as connecting more to a character the more realistically they are drawn. I don’t find that to be necessarily true’.⁵³

The importance of ‘connecting . . . to a character’ in the establishment of this film’s melancholy tone is apparent in the journey of Arctor. The narrative is most often aligned with the latter’s perspective, and his predicament is so extreme as to play almost like a pastiche of descriptions of the pathological condition of melancholia itself. Psychoanalytic theorizations of this depressive state, following Freud’s largely unchallenged 1917 account, have stressed the sufferer’s experience of loss of an object that is undefined.⁵⁴ Julia Kristeva has posited this as a loss of ‘the real that does not lend itself to signification’, connecting melancholy with a longing for the stage prior to the intervention of a mediating Symbolic order that divides the subject from itself and the world, and therefore associates it with ‘a modification of signifying bonds’.⁵⁵

Both Arctor’s trajectory and the experience of the film’s pastiche structuring speak to Kristeva’s profile of melancholy. The film is constructed around a central flashback sequence whose importance is downplayed by Linklater’s typically loose, undifferentiating structure. In it, we are taken back to Arctor’s ordinary former life, held up not as a nostalgic ideal but a model of paralyzing boredom over which even his

51 Nick Bradshaw, ‘Lost in the loop’, *Sight and Sound*, vol. 16, no. 8 (2006), p. 43.

52 Hoesterey, *Pastiche*, p. 51.

53 Brown, ‘A dream within a dream’, p. 156.

54 Sigmund Freud, ‘Mourning and melancholia’, in *On Murder, Mourning and Melancholia*, trans. Shaun Wideside (London: Penguin, 2005), pp. 201–18.

55 Julia Kristeva, *Black Sun*, reproduced in part in Jennifer Radden (ed.), *The Nature of Melancholy: from Aristotle to Kristeva* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 337–38.

current dysfunctional existence is preferred. While the central scene in which he watches television and eats popcorn with his family appears agreeable enough, the retrospective voiceover stresses Arctor's stultification, faced with the realization that 'nothing would ever change', and his consequent stumbling through his own life disengaged, going through the motions of being the good family man. What prompts Arctor to wake up is nothing less than contact with the real outside signification, in the shape of the pain caused by accidentally banging his head. But the resultant quest to return to a more authentic, less Symbolized, life leads him into a drug addiction that literally effects the disconnect between perception and physical reality, mind and body, experienced by sufferers of depression. Thus he tragically becomes not less but more alienated from the real, and his consequent error in mistaking himself for the prime suspect in his own undercover narcotics investigation enacts Freud's description of melancholic redirection of hatred onto the self, in the film objectified and described in increasingly spleen-filled terms.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ Freud, 'Mourning and melancholia', pp. 205–07.

In his *Écrits*, Lacan theorizes the real outside signification through the notion of the *jouissance* of desire's impossible fulfilment and, ultimately, death. Such a conceptualization sheds some light on Arctor's perplexing meditations, following his breakdown and institutionalization, on the way in which living and 'unliving' things are exchanging properties. In the psychoanalytic framework, these begin to coincide: intensely visceral experience, apparently the acme of vitality, tends towards destruction and death. Arctor's plea to be allowed to be close to something living might thus be read psychoanalytically as radically ambiguous. Benjamin has also linked melancholia to deadness in terms that resonate with *A Scanner Darkly*'s story of masquerade and impersonation, and in particular its status as animated pastiche. As he puts it:

under the gaze of the melancholy man. . . . The world is revived in a masked form, in a masked way, not as a mask, but through a form of masking and as its result. The masking does not precisely conceal, since what is lost cannot be recovered, but it marks the simultaneous condition of an irrecoverable loss that gives way to a reanimation of an evacuated world.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, trans. John Osborne (London: Verso, 1985), p. 139.

In tune with Linklater's statements about the inextricability of immediate reality and memory, in *A Scanner Darkly* the dislocation of signifying bonds through delusions produced by the drugs obtains at both of these levels. This is graphically demonstrated by a scene in which a holographic past-tense image of a prostitute, 'replayed' by Arctor using futuristic technology, morphs into a hallucination of Donna as readily as it did at the time of his encounter with her. The film thus confronts us even more directly than its predecessors with the mutual permeability of perception and memory. A scene in which Arctor's perspective on the world from inside his 'scramble suit' disguise includes the reflection of his own eyes becomes a metaphor for all experience of the world, as

coloured by perception rooted in physical consciousness. And if drug abuse is a reminder of the body's role in this complex interaction, perhaps the film's ending, in which a seemingly brain-dead Arctor unaccountably picks up the crucial proof he was once programmed to recognize (the flower used to manufacture the drug substance D), indicates the possibility of a kind of bodily or instinctive memory, beyond cognitive faculties.

Pastiche, deferring meaning through a chain whose origin outside textual signification is irrevocably obscured, thus shares a formal feature with melancholia. Dependent on a loss of the real outside signification, by the logic of the psychoanalytic framework it always has a potentially melancholy aspect. But Dyer is right to suggest that its default value is not necessarily distressing. Just as pastiche is not the same as nostalgia, and nostalgic art is in any case not always defined by a sense of loss, only under certain conditions does pastiche become melancholic. In its unusual specificity as a remediated but otherwise relatively closely mimetic pastiche of a live action film, *A Scanner Darkly* provides an ideal formal expression of the mournful aspect of the loss of the real. In part this is because the film, unlike most pastiche, is constantly (and more insistently than in the case of *Waking Life*) pointing spectators back to a text they have never experienced. The viewing experience thus parallels Arctor's own: he not only loses contact with reality (and his memories) in the present, the flashback shows that what should be the ideal past of his pre-addiction life was already defined by melancholy, provoked by a sense of the loss of another, more immediate reality, which is nebulous, unnameable and perhaps never known. Film noir as a generic concept has also been theorized as constructed not only *after* but in the possible *absence* of the fact, referring back to something that never existed in a coherent way.⁵⁸ Watching the film, we experience an extra level of deferral, or loss, as the pastiche directs us to a physical reality we can sense but with which we have never had any contact. In other words, as for Arctor, unmediated reality is doubly deferred. This is (doubly) melancholic because this real has been established as longed for, in a paranoid world where fantasy and duplicity are the norm. Graham Reynolds's doleful score heightens the lugubrious atmosphere throughout and it is interesting that it was produced in the same pastiche fashion as the visual material, as an electronic track based on a live instrumental recording: a method described by one critic in terms of underlying presence as absence lending a 'tactile, emotional resonance'.⁵⁹

Kristeva has also suggested that drugs are an exacerbating symptom rather than a cure in a media society that has left behind, or 'flattened', the soul.⁶⁰ When *A Scanner Darkly*'s substance D is revealed to be produced by the corporation profiting from fighting its spread – part of the impenetrable Big Brother machine controlling society – Linklater's conspiracy theories and visions of mankind as characters in someone else's dream assume a darker aspect. Here the closeness of its politics to

58 'A first conclusion, then, would be to contend that essentially, film noir has no essence, that its most stable characteristic is its "absent-centredness", its displacements, its over-determinedness, whose ghostly existence as too many discourses, instead of cancelling each other out, merely seems to amplify the term's resonance and suggestiveness.' Thomas Elsaesser, *Weimar Cinema and After: Germany's Historical Imaginary* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 423. See also Naremore, *More Than Night*.

59 Andrew Granade, 'A Scanner Darkly', *SoundtrackNet*. <<http://www.soundtrack.net/printable/review/?id=4109>> [accessed 20 November 2009].

60 Julia Kristeva, 'New maladies of the soul', in Kelly Olliver (ed.), *The Portable Kristeva* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1997), pp. 203–24.

those of the anticorporate *Fast Food Nation* (Richard Linklater, 2006), released the same year, become apparent.

In this light, and taken in conjunction with Linklater's negative allusions to contemporary US politics in interviews about the film, *A Scanner Darkly* appears illustrative of Butler's recent suggestion, in a discussion of melancholia, that societies may experience a sense of loss when external developments make previous modes of thought unsustainable.⁶¹ In the context of North America since 9/11 – one defined by mourning for a concrete object as well as, arguably, melancholia for a more elusive one – Butler has called for a reconceptualization of civilization in which belonging actually takes place in and through a sense of loss; for loss, she reminds us, has in the broadest sense 'made a tenuous "we" of us all'.⁶² Like Linklater in *A Scanner Darkly*, Butler may be describing a post-traumatic USA, but her historically specific observation, like his, has wider resonance. The loss implied by pastiche also takes place only as part of a comparably affirmative wider impulse, finding productive possibilities in the experience of human transience. The perceived loss of a phantasmatic real unmediated by culture – a loss whose imaginary status makes it a source of melancholy – is offset by the simultaneous immediacy of the pastiche experience. By the same token, pastiche that imitates past styles both evokes their pastness and revitalizes them with contemporaneity. Doubly paradoxical, pastiche expresses the tensions of inheritance versus originality, or universality versus idiosyncrasy, which underpin Linklater's work and, to some extent, all artistic endeavour.

⁶¹ See, for example, Smith, 'Lost in America', p. 30; Judith Butler, 'Afterword', in Butler (ed.), *Loss: the Politics of Mourning* (Los Angeles and Berkeley, CA and London: California University Press, 2003), p. 468.

⁶² Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: the Powers of Mourning and Violence* (New York, NY and London: Verso, 2004), p. 20.

Queering Chinese-language cinemas: Stanley Kwan's *Yang ± Yin: Gender in Chinese Cinema*

CHIA-CHI WU

1 I understand queers as people (including heterosexuals) who do not organize their sexuality according to the rubric of heterosexual procreative monogamy. Hence 'queer cinema' refers to the textual spaces, in production as well as reception, wherein heteronormativity is debunked, the homo–hetero dichotomy undercut, and gender and sexualities dislodged from essentialist strictures. See Harry Benshoff and Sean Griffin (eds), *Queer Cinema: the Film Reader* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2004), pp. 1–2.

2 Chris Berry, 'Sexual disOrientations: homosexual rights, East Asian films and postmodern postnationalism', in Tang Xiaobing and Stephen Snyder (eds), *In Pursuit of Contemporary East Asian Culture* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996), pp. 157–82. Mark Chiang, 'Coming out into the global system: postmodern patriarchies and transnational sexualities in *The Wedding Banquet*', in David L. Eng and Alice Y. Hom (eds), *Q and A: Queer in Asian America* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1998), pp. 374–95.

The rise of queer theory since the 1990s has coincided with an increasingly visible Chinese-language 'queer cinema' and inspired discussions of Chinese-language film through the lens of gender and sexuality.¹ Critical assessments often dwell upon a set of key issues, which can be summarized as follows. How does a film inflect a minor sexual or gender identity with the national, or vice versa? How does a film participate in a hegemonic construction of Hong Kong, Taiwanese or Chinese identity that ostracizes alternative gender or sexuality? How does a cinema belong to a discourse of citizenship or culture that deploys such practices as integral to the politics of inclusion? Given western discourses of exclusion, is 'queer' a 'Chinese' phenomenon? Is homophobia an import from the West, or does it have its own discursive history in Chinese culture? Could the rich crossdressing and same-sex phenomena that abound in Chinese-language cultural traditions be positioned as the 'premodern' forms of queer sexualities, and hence their cinematic rendition seen as isomorphic with postmodern queer culture? What cultural scripts have queer-themed Chinese-language films employed? Moreover, do they conform to or play against presuppositions of globalized queer discourses?

Particularly relevant to discussion of these issues is a 1996 essay by Chris Berry and its rebuttal in 1998 by Mark Chiang.² In 'Sexual disOrientations: homosexual rights, East Asian films and postmodern postnationalism', Berry first addresses the ways in which homophobia

has been mobilized in the production of national identity in both the East and the West. With regard to East Asia, he refers to a Chinese critic's remarks on *Xiyan/The Wedding Banquet* (Ang Lee, 1993) and a Singaporean foreign minister's comments on homosexuality, both of which are indicative of how homophobia is appropriated into anticolonial or antimodernity discourse, as homosexuality is portrayed as a western influence or 'part of a now-disowned "feudal" or "primitive" past', irrelevant to the modern nation-state or region.³ Just as the modern and the national are conceived as irreconcilable with the homosexual in such rhetoric, Berry contends, queer-themed East Asian film and video or even the 'sight of homosexuality' serve to displace the geopolitics of the national or the regional that are underpinned by heterosexist desires.⁴ For Berry, East Asian articulations of queer subjects are progressively 'deviationist', confounding boundaries not only between East and West but also between present and past, hence collectively illustrating 'a politics of identity that is postnationalist'.⁵ 'By making homosexuality visible at all, every one of these films and videos resists the conservative, government-centered ideologies of collective identity (whether national or regional) that attempt to other homosexuality'.⁶

Yet in identifying in contemporary East Asian films a fundamental challenge to heterosexist historiography or geopolitics, Berry positions the discourses of nation and homosexuality as necessarily in conflict, and neglects altogether the question of what 'replaces the nationalist ideologies of collective identity that homosexuality subverts'.⁷ In 'Coming out into the global system: postmodern patriarchies and transnational sexualities in *The Wedding Banquet*', Mark Chiang pinpoints the problem with Berry's implicit interest in mapping an (East Asian) 'queer diaspora' as he reevaluates *The Wedding Banquet*.⁸ Insisting upon investigating sexuality as a component of transnational practices, Chiang argues that 'the film cannot be read solely from within the frameworks of national culture, either Chinese or American, but must be read across them in a transnational analysis that attends simultaneously to the local and global'.⁹ To Chiang, Berry's formulation tends to 'generalize the challenge that homosexuality poses to national constructions of identity in the global system without fully accounting for the radically different valences of sexuality in relation to transnational capital and postmodernity'.¹⁰ While Berry sees *The Wedding Banquet* as contesting the homophobic discourses of nationalism, Chiang posits it as a transnational allegory which reconstructs the nationalist patriarchies by recuperating 'the homosexual threat', a process by which, as nationalist patriarchies are transformed into postmodern ones, the Chinese diaspora is coalesced into the global capitalist system.¹¹ If Berry shows the diminishing of national boundaries following the dissolution of the closet, Chiang points to how the nation may, in response to the changing material conditions of the global system, flexibly reconfigure its boundaries and redefine the closet. Homosexuality, therefore, 'may be visible only as an ideological mirage

3 Berry, 'Sexual disOrientations', p. 161.

4 Ibid., p. 159.

5 Ibid., p. 170.

6 Ibid., p. 167.

7 Chiang, 'Coming out into the global system', p. 388.

8 By 'queer diaspora' I designate both sexual marginality and geographical (hence political and economic) displacement.

9 Chiang, 'Coming out into the global system', p. 375.

10 Ibid., p. 375. *The Wedding Banquet* centres on a Taiwanese American gay character Gao Wai-tung, his white partner Simon and an illegal Shanghaiese immigrant Wei-wei, who enters into a bogus green-card marriage with Wai-tung to appease Wai-tung's parents. Conflicts arise as Wei-wei accidentally becomes impregnated by Wai-tung. In the end Wei-wei consents to stay in the contract and keeps the baby to continue the Gao family line.

11 Chiang, 'Coming out into the global system', pp. 389, 376.

12 Ibid., p. 388.

13 Ibid., pp. 375, 389.

14 I sometimes put quotation marks around Chinese or Chinese culture to caution against the essentializing tendency that might be implied in these categories.

15 Filmmakers interviewed by Kwan include Zhang Che, John Woo, Tsui Hark, Xie Jin, Xie Yan, Allen Fong, Hou Hsiao-hsien, Ang Lee, Edward Yang, Tsai Ming-liang, Chen Kaige and Zhang Yuan. Kwan also interviewed two influential film critics, Peggy Hsiung-ping Chiao (Taiwan), and Law Kar (Hong Kong). Hong Kong actors Di Long and Leslie Cheung also made comments.

16 Rosemary Hennessy, 'Queer visibility in commodity culture', *Cultural Critique*, no. 29 (1994–95), p. 35.

of transnational capital and is therefore implicated in a process of globalization in which the nation-state is complicit'.¹² In short, the kind of gay radicalism seemingly promised in *Wedding Banquet* is reabsorbed into the heteronormative matrix of intelligibility, wherein patriarchal and national demands are now met by the adaptable operation of capital.

Berry and Chiang's debate points to a paradox illuminated by that 'certain queer studies formulation of a global gay identity politics': while alternative sexual or gender practices may challenge the hegemonic construction of nationality in one context, their political progressiveness may not always be guaranteed in another in which the diasporic status of Chinese queers might serve to reinforce an already entrenched boundary of nation or patriarchy.¹³ I use this paradox as a starting point for my discussion of Stanley Kwan's *Nansheng nüxiang/Yang ± Yin: Gender in Chinese Cinema* (1996), arguing that while this video documentary counteracts the discourses of national identity buttressed by heteronormativity and provides an antiessentialist configuration of the relations between sexuality and nationality, it comes alarmingly close to the construction of a trans-Chinese queer identity on Chinese cultural oneness, which testifies not so much to the weight of cultural roots as to the sway of global capital in coopting differences and promoting reintegration. In its 'queering' of Chinese cinema – that is, its rediscovering or recreating of queer subtexts, making such subtexts more visible, and bringing subversive rereadings of canonical images to bear upon gender and sexuality – *Yang ± Yin* conjures up a queer imaginary that is also 'Chinese'.¹⁴ The personal and professional coming out that Kwan enacts in the film should be conceived not only in terms of sexuality but also in terms of national identity. Hence with *Yang ± Yin*, which was made shortly before the handover of Hong Kong to China, Kwan comes out not only as gay but also as 'Chinese'. I also extend Chiang's feminist impulse and argue for the importance of gender as a category of critique in estimating *Yang ± Yin*. To do so, I tackle Kwan's (mis)reading of female transgender subjects in the tradition of Cantonese opera and film, and highlight the issue of the (in)visibility of lesbian desire in Chinese-language cinemas. At the same time, by positing *Yang ± Yin* as an archaeology of pan-Chinese 'queer cinema', I probe the patterns of intelligibility or visibility by which Chinese-language films with queer subjects have been channeled for international exhibition, and how these patterns might be shaped by or tested against a cultural, diasporic identity, the globalized queer discourses, as well as the logic of a glocalized film culture.

Compiling film clips, archival images and interviews of Chinese film professionals,¹⁵ *Yang ± Yin* is immediately reminiscent of *The Celluloid Closet* (Rob Epstein and Jeffrey Friedman, 1995). While both films bear seemingly innocent witness to sexual permutation and assemble films that 'reflect' such changes, they also share an impulse to reconceptualize history within an interpretive framework that draws heavily upon postmodern critiques of sexual identity as stable and coherent.¹⁶ Yet

17 With the exception of the critic Stig Björkman and the actor Sam Neill, the series concentrates on filmmakers such as Stephen Frears, Anne-Marie Miéville and Jean-Luc Godard, Jang Sun-Woo, Stanley Kwan, Oshima Nagisa, Nelson Pereira dos Santos, Martin Scorsese and Sergei Selyanov.

Yang ± Yin articulates a much more ostentatious and complex construction of nationalism in its chronicling of cinematic genders and sexualities. The video is one of a series of documentaries commissioned by BFI TV – under the banner ‘Century of Cinema’ – to revisit the history of national cinemas and celebrate cinema’s centenary. Based on the dubious assumption that cinematic history could and should be recounted by international auteurs and by way of geopolitical demarcation, the series recruits mostly world-class filmmakers, with Colin MacCabe as executive producer.¹⁷ Stanley Kwan fulfils the ‘Chinese’ category and the sociological slant of the series by assembling footage ranging from films made in 1930s Shanghai and Hong Kong films, to Taipei’s urban cinema of the 1990s. At the same time, *Yang ± Yin* takes a reflexive stance and is much more personal than either *The Celluloid Closet* or any other production in the BFI series. Narrated in Kwan’s first-person voiceover, *Yang ± Yin* starts with Kwan’s inquiry into his own ‘female sensibility’ (hitherto a staple of Kwan’s work) and ends with an interview with his mother, in which she acknowledges Kwan’s homosexuality and openly rejects heterosexual procreative matrimony. The film thus accomplishes Kwan’s coming out.

The video is divided into six ‘chapters’, each stating one thematic strand within the films discussed by Kwan: Chapter 1, ‘The Absence of Father (Part I)’; Chapter 2, ‘Feminine (Yin) and Masculine (Yang): Face and Body’; Chapter 3, ‘Fathers Are Everywhere’; Chapter 4, ‘Looking For Father, Finding Elder Brother’; Chapter 5, ‘Transvestites, Transsexuals’; Chapter 6, ‘The Absence of Father (Part II)’. From chapter to chapter, Kwan locates film narratives marked with ambiguous representations of gender or sexuality, or examines films directly thematized around related subject matter, persistently conducting a rediscovery of queer sensibility in Chinese-language cinemas. Chapter 1 touches upon Kwan’s experience of public bathhouses, as a significant part of the memory of his father. Chapter 2 presents a brief montage sequence of Kwan’s early works, which leads him raising questions about his cross-gender identification: why has he, a male filmmaker, acquired a reputation for making ‘women’s films’; are the female characters the projection of his ‘femininity’ on the screen; did his family, which is predominantly female, shape his attitudes towards women or teach him about female strength?

Kwan then shifts to the male-bonding themes that pervade the work of John Woo and Zhang Che (Woo’s major influence). Showing a selection of scenes from their films that are highly charged with visuals of the male body or same-sex affect, Kwan asks Zhang and Woo whether they are conscious of the same-sex undertones that might be read as homoerotic. Both filmmakers deny that homoeroticism is their intention. Zhang ascribes his male same-sex images to a Chinese historical legend, *Sanguo yanyi/Romance of Three Kingdoms*, and resists the Freudian interpretation advanced by Kwan. Woo characterizes his same-sex themes as ‘mutual admiration that goes beyond sexual terms’, though

acknowledges the possibility of homoerotic interpretation with the disclaimer, 'the finished film isn't mine'. Kwan, however, juxtaposes the works of these two filmmakers with the comments of Peggy Hsiung-ping Chiao, who frames her discussion in the vocabulary of Freudian psychoanalysis (such as 'fetishizing or worshipping the phallus'). At one point in this section, when Zhang refutes the psychoanalytic tendency to 'sexualize everything', Kwan cuts to a martial sequence from Zhang's *Xi'an shalu/The Slaughter in Xian* (1990) that features the bloody penetration of a male character's crotch with a sword, suggesting the reading of male rape and undermining Zhang's stance. Kwan goes on to review Chinese films made in the 1930s and early 1940s in Republican China (1912–49). His choice of texts includes Ma Xu Wei-bang's 'psychological perversion' films, such as *Yeban gesheng/Song at Midnight* (1941), and some same-sex sequences in the leftist films *Dalu/The Road* (Sun Yu, 1934) and *Langtaosha/Waves Wash the Sand* (Wu Yong-gang, 1936). Kwan's investigation of these films is also conducted in psychoanalytic terms such as sexual connotation, displacement and perversity.

The 1930s and 1940s films cited by Kwan testify to the influence of Hollywood as well as late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century European sexology. This sexology, often mediated through Japanese sources, was imported into China, gained wide currency among the urban Chinese educated class during the May Fourth era (1915–27), and has since shaped the intellectual conception of sex.¹⁸ While Kwan's and Chiao's psychoanalytic readings of the texts could be attributed to the global popularity of Freudian psychoanalysis in the 1980s,¹⁹ they indirectly bespeak the extent to which European-Japanese sexology and the resultant modern Chinese neologism have penetrated contemporary Chinese language and understandings of sex. In the case of Zhang and Woo, the fact that the images were made *without* the consciousness of same-sex desire that would now readily be rendered as 'homoerotic' illustrates an argument made by Sang Tze-lan, though in a different context: the point is not whether same-sex physical affection has existed, is publicly visible or tolerated, but rather how such affection has come to involve new frameworks of signification and perception that depart from the venerable notions of friendship and bonding.²⁰

Employing a new framework, *Yang ± Yin* uncovers the collapse of gender and sexual boundaries, and resignifies images as both 'queer' and 'Chinese'. Reinvesting queerness in the category of Chinese, the film conflates the Taoist philosophical entities 'yang' and 'yin' with the masculine and the feminine respectively, suggesting the Chinese therapeutic view of a balanced androgynous body and establishing a connection between Chinese philosophy and the postmodern conception of polysexuality. In Chapters 5 and 6, Kwan repeatedly reminds the audience of the longstanding cross-gender, crossdressing practices and same-sex phenomena in Chinese theatre and literature. He presents these practices and phenomena as deep-rooted within Chinese cultural

18 See Sang Tze-lan, *The Emerging Lesbian: Female Same-Sex Desire in Modern China* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2003), pp. 3–34.

19 I am grateful to one of *Screen's* anonymous readers for pointing this out.

20 Sang, *The Emerging Lesbian*, p. 3.

traditions, attempting a cinematic archaeology of Chinese sexuality that identifies preexisting gender and sexual forms and insists on the historicity and continuation of such forms in contemporary Chinese cultural life and artefacts. Chapter 5 in particular probes the postmodern reverberations of such phenomena in cinematic renditions of the 1980s and 1990s, such as *Bawang bieji/Farewell My Concubine* (Chen Kaige, 1993), *Daoma dan/Peking Opera Blues* (Tsui Hark, 1986), *Xiao'ao jianghu II dongfang bubai/Swordsman II* (Ching Siu-tung and Stanley Tong, w. and prod. Tsui Hark, 1991), *Liangzhu/The Lovers* (Tsui Hark, 1995), *Dongxie xidu/Ashes of Time* (Wong Kar-wai, 1994) and *Juedai shuangjiao/Handsome Siblings* (Eric Tsang, 1994). At the same time, Kwan tackles these films in terms that are in tune with a queer critique of heteronormativity. He pinpoints several problems with *Farewell My Concubine*, including the toning down of homosexual love by the introduction of Gong Li's character, which exists neither in the original novel nor in its adaptation for Hong Kong television; the homophobia of the tragic denouement of the film in which Leslie Cheung's character really kills himself as he acts out the suicide that concludes the titular play; and, more importantly, the film's confusion between gender and sexuality, that is, the (clichéd) view that a homosexual man is one who identifies with a woman or adopts feminine mannerisms. (Kwan includes the sequence from *Farewell My Concubine* in which the main character, as a boy, is brutally treated in opera training and forced to assume a girl's identity to fully learn his role.)

Kwan also takes issue with Tsui Hark's imposition of heteronormative assumptions upon his gender-bending narratives. Kwan characterizes Tsui as the 'Chinese' filmmaker most fascinated by crossdressing and gender-bending, whose films start by questioning but by the end always 'reaffirm the heterosexual orthodoxy. The subversion is defused.' This contention hinges on Tsui's *The Lovers*. Both this film and *Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai* (Sang Hu, 1953) are adaptations of a well-known folktale, *Liang shanbo yu zhu yingtai/Butterfly Lovers*, which is said to be based upon a 'true story' from the Ming dynasty, when official education was a male privilege. Zhu Yingtai, the daughter of a high-ranking official, crossdresses in order to study at a boarding school. She bonds with her classmate Liang Shanbo, who remains oblivious to Zhu's gender identity. As Zhu is called home by her family for an arranged marriage, she asks Liang to marry 'his' sister, by whom she means herself, and to visit 'him' after Liang passes the imperial exam. Liang becomes a low-ranking official and discovers Zhu's real identity. His attempt to marry Zhu is then thwarted by Zhu's parents, and he dies of heartbreak. On Zhu's wedding day, Zhu asks her wedding procession to stop by Liang's grave. Upon their arrival, Liang's tombstone breaks open, Zhu jumps into the crack, and two butterflies fly out just as the tomb closes again. The story has been adapted countless times²¹ and has also been appropriated as a foundational Chinese gay narrative. Kwan complains about Tsui's betrayal of a key part of every Chinese gay man's

²¹ The latest cinematic revision and a martial arts inflection of this folktale is *Wuxia liangzhu/Butterfly Lovers* (Jingle Ma, 2008).

22 Neither Cheung nor Kwan expands on the reasoning behind this. My understanding of the seeming tolerance or appreciation of female crossdressing performance is that an actress's crossdressing is not perceived as a threat to the Chinese patriarchal order, while an actor's crossdressing constitutes a source of male anxiety.

memory and fantasy by 'straightening' a story that 'everyone tacitly knows as a gay story'. Kwan then looks at Brigitte Lin's gender-bending roles, beginning with her androgynous role in Tsui's *Peking Opera Blues*. Here Kwan presents a gender analysis that shows how patriarchy and heterosexism have spurred a backlash against male crossdressers as he exposes the unequal terms on which Chinese people perceive male and female crossdressers. Leslie Cheung, interviewed by Kwan, attributes such discrimination to what he calls 'Chinese morality', which in Cheung's view sets a lower standard of verisimilitude for an actress's cross-gender performance than for that of an actor because of the assumption of women's inferiority. As a result, 'it's easier for a woman to play a man than vice versa'. On the wide appeal of Brigitte Lin's transgender roles, Cheung contends that an actress's (or Lin's) cross-gender performance is more easily accepted and appreciated, while actors impersonating females tend to arouse suspicion about their sexuality or moral integrity.²²

To say that Kwan promotes a queer sensibility in his understanding of Chinese cultural and cinematic traditions does not entail arguing that these traditions are originally unqueer, or that their queerness is more or less Kwan's invention. It does, however, rehearse the Foucauldian conception of gender and sexuality as shaped by discourse, or, in Sang Tze-lan's words, as subject to new and shifting frameworks of signification and perception. This resignification of preexisting cross-gender and same-sex phenomena is discernible but simultaneously obliterated in the English subtitles to Kwan's narration. On the one hand, the Chinese phrases that predominate Kwan's discussion of sexuality – such as *tongxing qingyu* (same-sex desire or homoeroticism), *xingbie daocuo* (gender confusion or gender inversion) or *bianxing* (literally sex change or transsexual) – make it relatively easy for the translator, since they have an origin in the language of Euro-American sexual discourse and have been circulated in Chinese communities, sometimes even gaining in popularity through GLBTQ (gay-lesbian-bi-trans-queer) movements. Yet when Kwan employs argot specific to the cross-gender performance in Chinese cultural practices, the subtitles inevitably decontextualize the practices and render the argot as isomorphic with queer terms, partly because of the imperative to immediately provide an approximate English equivalent. In both Kwan's narration and the English subtitles, phrases that entail a historicized understanding of Chinese literary and theatrical traditions, such as *yizhuang* (literally, 'changing apparel') and *fanchuan* (reverse role-play), are then resignified as (and reduced to) transvestitism and drag.

In highlighting the link between postmodern polysexual sensibility and traditional cultural forms of sexual organization, Kwan encodes these forms as queerly transgressive. And in laying bare and reinterpreting as queer the elements that seem to have been closeted in Chinese-language cinemas, *Yang ± Yin*, to borrow Berry's insight, blurs not only the past–present distinction underlying the construction of

Chinese modern nations but also the East–West boundary constitutive of neo-Confucian, East Asian modernity. As a cine-genealogy showcasing both national cinema and Chinese queerness, *Yang ± Yin* certainly realizes the political imperative advocated by international queer studies to pluralize a national or cultural identity with queer subjects and to reverse the hegemonic containment of sexual minorities. Kwan's emphasis on alternative genders and sexualities in Chinese-language cinemas is especially meaningful in this *singular* 'Chinese' context.

However, if we shift our critical gaze to a transnational framework, the film immediately evokes a more dubious cultural politics. For example, Kwan's compilation of cinematic texts originating from Hong Kong, Taiwan and China is itself a transnational act under the pretext of historical, cultural and social homogeneity. The film overlooks the fluctuating political animosity or sympathy between these communities and the distinct historical trajectories that have marked the consciousness of each populace, as most textual elements operate on the dubious premisses of Hong Kong's, Taiwan's and China's shared cultural heritage and sociological proximity. 'Crossdressing', Kwan says in the last chapter, 'is a formative element of *our* culture' (emphasis added). Putting aside his mother tongue (Cantonese) and delivering his narration in Mandarin (the official language of China, Taiwan and post-1997 Hong Kong), Kwan glides over the geopolitical disparities demarcated by the three countries' films to address a pan-Chinese consciousness. (The chapter 'Fathers are Everywhere', for example, moves in a swift and haphazard way between the works and interviews of Hou Hsiao-hsien, Ang Lee, Chen Kaige, Tsai Ming-liang, Edward Yang and Allen Fong). In short, the queerness reconstituted by Kwan as Chinese is pan-Chinese or trans-Chinese, which underpins the resurgent geopolitics of 'Greater China' or 'Cultural China', terms that refer to the economically or culturally integrated zone consisting of Hong Kong, Taiwan and China.²³ With all its queerness, *Yang ± Yin* feeds into another discourse of collective identity and perpetuates the myth of Chinese culturalism.

Imbricated in Kwan's culturalist configuration of trans-Chinese queer oneness is another problem, his somewhat ahistorical understanding of gender-bending and same-sex phenomena in Chinese cultural traditions, particularly female transgender subjects. Kwan's narration, or the English subtitles, conveniently and inevitably reduce argot specific to traditional gender-bending practices to postmodern ones (such as transvestitism and drag), and such a reduction serves as a warrant for Kwan's queering of the cinematic renditions of these practices. Central to the discussion is Yam Kim-fai (Ren Jian-hui), the most influential male impersonator in Hong Kong Cantonese opera and cinema, and her professional and personal symbiosis with the actress Baak Suet-sin (Bai Xue-xian). Yam's career and fame spanned more than four decades, from her beginnings as an opera singer in the 1920s to becoming a film star in 1951 and her retirement in 1969. With Baak she founded the

23 Greater China (*da zhonghua*), or Greater Chinese Economic Sphere (*da zhonghua jingji quan*), is an epithet that envisions a financial market comprising Hong Kong, Taiwan and China as major players, while including other Chinese communities such as Singapore and Macao. Another trope that denotes an integrationist logic would be 'Greater Cultural China' (*da wenhua zhonghua*), premised upon pan-Chinese culturalism and presupposing a shared cultural heritage among Chinese communities. For an example that explicates and celebrates such economic codependency among the Chinese communities, see Willem van Kemenade, *China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Inc.: the Dynamics of a New Empire* (New York, NY: Knopf, 1997). In this essay, I follow Shih Shu-mei and, by way of viewing *Yang ± Yin*, work towards revealing these tropes as China-centric. See Shih Shu-mei, *Visuality and Identity: Sinophone Articulations across the Pacific* (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2007), pp. 86–116.

Xianfengming Opera Troupe in 1956, marking the beginning of their long-term on- and off-stage partnership. They stepped off stage in 1969 but remained active in training new opera talent for a few more years, and lived together until Yam died in 1989. In *Yang ± Yin* (Chapter 6), Kwan meditates on Yam and Baak's partnership as he cuts between their films and photos (mostly appearing as a straight couple, with Yam crossdressing in period costume or contemporary apparel). Echoing Tsui Hark's comments on Yam and Baak's legend ('Chinese people are used to gender reversal'), Kwan demonstrates a strong sense of the continuing importance of preexisting forms of sexual organization in modern or postmodern life, at the same time offering an antiessentialist understanding of gender and sexuality as non-fixed identities and as a kind of performance. As he forcefully states:

Cross-dressing has a big part in traditional Chinese theaters, and is a formative element in our culture. . . . Chinese people believe in 'tai-jiao' (influences in the womb). Was I somehow influenced by all those Yam's films [sic] my mom watched when she was carrying me? Did her films teach me that gender needs not be a boundary but a game?

To today's queer eyes, Yam's transgender performance undoubtedly invites a gaze 'that locates *fanchuan* performers within a spectrum of "fluid" genders'.²⁴ But I want to stress the shift in the terms of understanding the Yam–Baak phenomenon through time (and perhaps female *fanchuan* performers in various Chinese-language theatres in general), and foreground again the process of resignification involved in Kwan's framework. We should note, for example, the specificity of *fanchuan* performances in postwar Hong Kong Cantonese opera and opera films. Tan See-kam cogently points out that *fanchuan* performers are specialist, *full-time* crossdressers, unrelated to gender confusion or transvestism that the term 'drag-acts' might connote. They are, instead, transsexuals (though without undergoing gender reassignment surgery) who crossdress not in order to *pass* as the other sex but, literally and metaphorically, to *become* or *be* the very sex they impersonate.²⁵ Although Tan brings *fanchuan* performance in line with a queer understanding, his distinction of *fanchuan* performance from drag and transvestism has important implications for how transgender theory departs from queer theory rather than overlaps with it. Tan's characterization of Yam as a full time gender-bender who seeks to become the other sex seems to suggest a transgender/transsexual subject seeking to be 'nonperformative, to be constative, quite simply to be'.²⁶ As scholars have pointed out, this is an experience that cannot be easily appropriated by queer theory, which has relied upon the idealization of the transgender subject for tropes of traversing, transgression, performativity and subversion.²⁷ If Tan's description of *fanchuan* performers is accurate – 'in their work, it is apparent that there is nothing perverse with, or weird about, trafficking at the borders of gender'²⁸ – then a *fanchuan* performer should be located in the transsexual process

24 Tan See-kam, 'The cross-gender performances of Yam Kim-fei, or the queer factor in postwar Hong Kong Cantonese opera/opera films', *Journal of Homosexuality*, vol. 39, nos 3–4 (2000), p. 209.

25 Ibid.

26 Jay Prosser, *Second Skins: the Body Narratives of Transsexuality* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1998), p. 32.

27 See Helen Hok-Sze Leung, 'Unsung heroes: reading transgender subjectivities in Hong Kong action cinema', in Pang Lai-kwan and Wong Day (eds), *Masculinities and Hong Kong Cinema* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2005), pp. 81–98.

28 Tan, 'The cross-gender performances of Yam Kim-fei', p. 208.

that 'eventually arrives at a more stable form of gender embodiment'.²⁹ This process, often conveniently dismissed by queer theory, poignantly introduces the discrepancy between an individual's anatomy at birth and his or her subjective gender identification, and hence complicates the notion of same-sex desire that categorizes desire according to the biological sex of the bodies. This gap begs an important question: if Yam self-identified and was identified as a stable, constant, non-performative, non-fluid, masculine figure, would her partnership with Baak, both on and off stage, not then be heterosexual instead of homosexual?

Perhaps this explains why, up until the time Yam died, media discourse around the Yam–Baak phenomenon before the 1980s rarely invoked lesbianism or any heightened awareness of female same-sex eroticism, despite the wide public acceptance of the women's partnership. How the Yam–Baak phenomenon has been perceived over time requires more research; but it is one thing to say, as Tsui does in Kwan's interview, that Yam and Baak were 'totally taken as a couple', and another to acknowledge feminine homoeroticism fully. Two-shot photos of Yam and Baak (some with both of them in female apparel) were ubiquitous, with professional prestige consistently attached to their image. Yet during the years in which they were most active (from the 1950s to 1969) and afterwards, the expressions *tongxinglian* (same-sex love), *nü-tongxinglian* (female same-sex love) or *tongxing qingyu* (same-sex desire) – which have limited currency and are loaded with overtones of depravity – do not seem to have been applied to them in public discourse. Thus the tacit acknowledgement of their partnership cannot be seen as marking a radical public consciousness that registers the possibility of lesbianism, but more an attitude that entailed the suspension of Yam's sex and granted it the status of sexual only inasmuch as Yam was deliberately (mis)identified as a masculine figure. At one point in Kwan's interview with his mother, she claims to have identified Yam as a man rather than a woman. How subversive then is this public imaginary if it is configured predominantly in heterosexual or homosocial terms, such as sisterhood or 'firm friends'?³⁰ Can we characterize it as a sexually fluid imaginary if it excludes intra-gender eroticism or is predicated exclusively upon the invisibility of lesbian desire? Kwan's use of female transgender subjects to undermine the values of male lineage and to bear out the premiss of Chinese culture as queerly transgressive would then be inconclusive.

Kwan's misappropriation of female transgender subjects has significant political implications. First, although the sexual politics in *Yang ± Yin* seems to pivot upon (homo)sexuality, eventually *gender* becomes a crucial category of critique, especially where it intersects with the sexual dimension of the film. The construction of Chinese queerness in *Yang ± Yin* is partly founded on the shaky ground of the Yam–Baak phenomenon, which reveals more about the social containment of gay women's desire than its visibility. As I have tried to demonstrate, despite Yam–Baak's media ubiquity their partnership apparently escaped the

30 In most public discourses, the Yam–Baak partnership has been seen to be founded upon 'friendship'. See, for example, Yu Mo-wan, 'Bai Xuexian (Bakk Suet-sim)', in Li Cheuk-to (ed.), *Cantonese Opera Film Retrospective* (Hong Kong: 11th Hong Kong International Film Festival, 1987), p. 95.

31 In view of *Yang ± Yin*'s thematic obsession with 'China', I again understand the 'diasporic subject' in the film as over-determined by minority sexuality and geopolitical marginality, even though in other contexts characterizing Hong Kong as part of the Chinese diaspora might provoke theoretical debates.

32 Dennis Altman, 'Rupture or continuity? The internationalization of gay identities', *Social Text*, vol. 14, no. 3 (1996), pp. 77–94.

stigma of *nü-tongxinglian* (female same-sex love) because it was not acknowledged as an erotic category. *Yang ± Yin* overlooks the complex issue of lesbian visibility in its haste to draw upon female transgender subjects as both 'Chinese' and queerly subversive.

Furthermore, in its use of the father as a recurring motif, *Yang ± Yin* marks it as a term abounding in metonymic figurations. On the one hand, the father signifies a patriarchal dominance that exiles queer subjects and shapes their diasporic status.³¹ On the other hand, the little boy's admiration and worship of his father initiates him into homosexual desire. Such admiration is constantly recounted in Chapter 1, 'The Absence of Father (Part I)', in which Kwan narrates his memories of his father and the time they spent in public baths, and in Chapter 3, 'Fathers Are Everywhere', in which he discusses the thematic obsession with the father figure in the works of Hou Hsiao-hsien, Ang Lee, Chen Kaige, Tsai Ming-liang, Edward Yang and Allen Fong; it also appears in Chapter 4, 'Looking for Father, Finding Elder Brother', in which Kwan dwells upon the displacement of a boy's desire for the father onto the brother in Tsai Ming-liang's films, and in Chapter 6, 'The Absence of Father (Part II)', which ends the film with Kwan's interview with his mother, who relates her fantasy about Yam Kim-fai and dismisses patrilineal reproduction.

In sketching the crisis of heterosexual patriarchal families, however, the film discursively displaces the attachment to the father onto 'Chinese culture', replacing patriarchy with cultural traditions universally acknowledged as 'Chinese'. Dennis Altman demands that we ask whose cultural scripts are being employed when describing the globalization of gay identities.³² To answer this, we might say that *Yang ± Yin* (re)inscribes trans-Chinese homosexualities by envisioning a 'Greater Cultural China', connoting a cultural reunification that is elevated beyond historical and political differences. In other words, it constitutes a queer discourse with the fetishized attributes of Chinese literary and theatrical traditions as well as the established genres of Chinese-language cinemas (martial arts, action and opera films). Thus the meaning of 'the father' in *Yang ± Yin* is in a state of flux between: first, the narrator's or interviewees' biological father(s); secondly, a primal object of male same-sex desire; thirdly, heteronormative patriarchy; and fourthly, a conception of Chinese nation and culture loaded with culturalist assumptions and ethnicizing tendencies. The cinematic sexualities drawn from Taiwanese, Hong Kong and Chinese films become either culturally synonymous (putatively sharing one common cultural heritage or vocabulary), historically continuous (as premodern origins or modern/postmodern counterparts of Chinese queer subjectivities) or sociologically coeval (flattening the differences of the distinct historical trajectories that 'queer' cultural formations, each a response to geopolitical specificity, follow at various Chinese/translocal locales). The international, trans-Chinese queer as evoked in *Yang ± Yin* is thus paradoxically nationalist.

To say that *Yang ± Yin* embodies more a culturalist representation of 'Chineseness' than a threat to homophobic nationalism, as Berry would have argued for an East Asian queer film, does not mean that I understand Berry's and Chiang's positions as mutually exclusive. Part of the appeal of *Yang ± Yin* lies in how it signifies progressiveness in multiple national and temporal contexts. As mentioned earlier, Kwan's pluralizing of national identity with queer subjects is always meaningful in a *singular* Chinese context. On the campus of a Taipei university in 2009, where the syllabus of a seminar on queer cinema fixed to the door of a professor's office is repeatedly torn down, the classroom screening of *Yang ± Yin* still functions to disrupt the heterosexist assumptions of curriculum design. Indeed, it could be argued that *Yang ± Yin* is both subversive of the heteronormative construction of national identity and complicit with the new transnational, postmodern order that writes sexual radicalism back into the complacency of Chineseness or Chinese culture. It is such complacency that this essay aims to caution against.

Suspicion about the power of newly formed allegiances and identities (particularly queer internationalism) to undermine nationalist construction has already been echoed in scholarly works. *Underground Empires* reveals the ways in which 'being Chinese' today is increasingly embedded in the processes associated with global capitalism and its modernities.³³ Although Chinese culture and identity are being constantly reconfigured in non-essentialist terms, sometimes it is exactly the transnational, deterritorialized practices (trade, culture, migration) that reinstate 'China' as the primal source and centre.³⁴ Shih Shu-mei alerts us to the 'contiguity constructed among the transnational subject ... the minority subject ... and resistance against the nation-state',³⁵ reminding us of the 'persistence of meaning-production privileging the nation-state' in the articulations of transnational flow, postcolonial hybridities and Asian or Chinese cosmopolitanism.³⁶ In its transnational manoeuvre, *Yang ± Yin* rescripts an order in which Chinese culturalism reigns. Only when it is facilitated by the transnational does Chinese culturalism serve as a nationalism capable of subjecting people's cultural experiences under its full sway.

Berry's contention that the very sight of homosexuality in East Asian film and video upsets the national or regional geopolitics of heteronormativity is intensely engaged with issues of visibility. It assumes a specular economy that measures the political value of cultural representations in terms of *what is seen*, and in a sense resonates with epistemologies of revelation rooted in the European Enlightenment.³⁷ Yet if we understand visibility, like Judith Butler, as a matter of knowledges shaped by 'discourses, significations, and modes of intelligibility',³⁸ *Yang ± Yin* may index some patterns of visibility by which Chinese-language films – queer-themed or not – are channeled into international exhibition. Doubling as Kwan's coming-out film, it fits the agenda of 'mature' visibility of participating in the public cultural

33 Donald M. Nonini and Ong Aihwa (eds), *Underground Empires: the Cultural Politics of Modern Chinese Transnationalism* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1997).

34 Nonini and Ong, 'Chinese transnationalism as an alternative modernity', in *Underground Empires*, p. 9.

35 Shih Shu-mei, 'Globalisation and minoritisation: Ang Lee and the politics of flexibility', *New Formations*, no. 40 (2000), p. 88.

36 Ibid., p. 90.

37 Martin F. Manalansan IV, 'In the shadows of Stonewall: examining gay transnational politics and the diasporic dilemma', in Lisa Lowe and David Lloyd (eds), *The Politics of Culture in the Shadow of Capital* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 1997), p. 490.

38 Hennessy, 'Queer visibility in commodity culture', p. 38. See also Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1990).

39 Here I have recent ones in mind, such as *Fabulous, the Story of Queer Cinema* (Lisa Ades and Leslie Klainberg, 2006) and *Here's Looking at You, Boy* (André Schäfer, 2007).

40 Berry, 'Sexual disOrientations', pp. 157–58.

41 See Allen Chun, 'Fuck Chineseness: on the ambiguities of ethnicity as culture as identity', *boundary 2*, vol. 23, no. 2 (1996), pp. 111–38.

42 Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 17.

arena championed by international and western queer activism. With its somewhat drab visual design, it falls into the category of 'queer documentary',³⁹ a favourite at queer festivals and in GLBTQ programming at international film festivals and museums. Circulating almost exclusively in the transnational, translocal nexus of art cinema, *Yang ± Yin* to a certain extent conforms to Berry's thesis that 'rendering homosexualities visible on a global scale joins with other global flows, postcolonial hybridization, and localized appropriations of an emergent postmodern global order that is simultaneously postnational'.⁴⁰ Despite the narrow scope of its choice of films and filmmakers, to metropolitan audiences (with the transnational capitalist class as their mainstay) the film showcases an archaeology of Chinese-language cinemas that purports to excavate the roots of pancultural queer sexualities by extending the global (mis)recognition long granted to 'Chinese culture' to pan-Chinese homosexuality. Although a generalized Chinese culture is as historically inaccurate and theoretically untenable as a generalized Chinese ethnicity,⁴¹ such culturalist and fetishizing tendencies greatly promoted the global visibility of Chinese-language films with queer subjects, especially in the 1990s, as evidenced by the success of *The Wedding Banquet*, *Swordsman II* and *Farewell My Concubine*. The popularity of these films, however, provokes the following questions: if a queer-themed film does not utilize an identifiable visual or aural coding of Chinese culture, and is not concerned with an identity dictated by 'out' politics, what textual and material processes condition and contribute to its visibility; and what could *Yang ± Yin* or Kwan's later works tell us about how conceptions of queer visibility are shaped by or tested against the logic and contradictions of a glocalised film culture?

In its trans-Chinese cultural imaginary, *Yang ± Yin* eclipses pioneering queer-themed Taiwanese films such as *Niezi/The Outsiders* (Yu Kan-ping, 1986) and *Shuang Zhuo/Twin Bracelets* (Huang Yu-shan, 1991), films that do not have a strong visual or aural impulse for Chinese cultural fetishism even if they are concerned with nation, family and patriarchy. When Kwan addresses films that are equally removed from Chinese themes, it is to underscore sociological contemporaneity between Chinese communities. In one sequence, Kwan juxtaposes Tsai Ming-liang with Zhang Yuan (who was making *Donggong xigong/East Palace, West Palace* [1996] at the time of Kwan's interview) and relates the rapid growth of nuclear families in Taiwan and China to the queer sexualities of the younger generation. However, I would argue that, more than the social realities manifest in their films, what Tsai and Zhang (and Kwan himself) really have in common are 'the norms of intelligibility',⁴² by which they are understood around the globe: that is, discourses invested with values of alternative praxis – art cinema, auteurism, independent filmmaking and film connoisseurship. These discourses celebrate marginal cinemas, but at the same time conceal the cultural politics that reduce Chinese-language filmmakers to subcontractors of international art cinema, a process to which the very

43 See, as an example of such analysis, Fran Martin, *Situating Sexualities: Queer Representation in Chinese Fiction, Film and Public Culture* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2003); or her 'Taiwan (trans)national cinema, or, the far-flung adventures of a Taiwanese tomboy', in Darrell W. Davis and Ru-shou Robert Chen (eds), *Cinema Taiwan: Politics, Popularity and State of the Arts* (London: Routledge, 2007), pp. 131–45.

44 Jason Ho, 'A queer (re)evaluation: Stanley Kwan and *The Island Tales*', *Cultural Studies Monthly*, no. 64 (2007). <http://www.cc.ncu.edu.tw/~csa/journal/64/journal_park476.htm> [accessed 13 December 2009]. For an analysis of *Hold You Tight*, see Song Hwee Lim, *Celluloid Comrades: Representations of Male Homosexuality in Contemporary Chinese Cinemas* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2006), pp. 153–79. For a broader discussion of a critical approach that combines auteurism and queer cultural reception practices, see Alexander Doty, 'Whose text is it anyway?', in Benshoff and Griffin (eds), *Queer Cinema*, pp. 19–33.

45 Ho, 'A queer (re)evaluation'.

46 Taiwanese pop of the 1980s and early 1990s enjoyed a second wave of popularity in China as older generations of Taiwanese pop artists revived their career in China by 'recycling' their repertoire of hits. These pop songs entered the work of young Chinese filmmakers (especially the sixth generation or the so-called urban generation) as a way of inscribing a 'new' cultural scene or emerging youth sensibility. When Taiwanese viewers see these films at international film festivals, they are often struck by the anachronism of the soundtracks, a form of *déjà entendu*.

making of *Yang ± Yin* as a BFI commission attests. A more focused analysis of Taiwan's cultural history⁴³ in relation to queer representation reveals how hard it is to fit Tsai into Kwan's trans-Chinese queer or sociological imaginary, not to mention Kwan's overlooking of landmark queer female films (such as *Twin Bracelets* or the *Nüwang feng/Queen Bee* series in 1981). Yet the fact that Taiwanese or other Chinese-language 'queer' film histories were relatively uncharted at the time of the documentary's release grants Kwan pioneer status as a film historian, while the extremely limited circulation of *Yang ± Yin* further entrenches its status as a piece of 'hard-to-access' artwork. The production, distribution and circulation of *Yang ± Yin* bring Kwan himself in line with other household names (Tsai and Zhang) responsible for sustaining the reputation of post-Chinese new waves as international art cinema, further lodging the discussion of cinematic queer visibility – be it of Taiwan, Hong Kong or China – in the realm of cine-modernism, alternative film markets and 'highbrow' spectatorship.

Kwan followed *Yang ± Yin* with *Yuekuaile yueduoluo/Hold You Tight* (1997) and *Youshi tiaowu/The Island Tales* (1999), both of which consider notions of alienation and the stranger within an intricate web of human relations, and create a strong, poignant portrayal of undetermined or fluid sexualities. Although they were shot immediately before and after the transfer of Hong Kong's sovereignty, their themes resonate more with psychosexual dynamics than with national or cultural ideologies. Yet now that critics and audiences have begun to read Kwan's sexual biography into his works and construct a queer form of auteurism around him, these films have been assessed as distant from 'what radical gay directors might make'.⁴⁴ *Hold You Tight* gives a superb, ambiguous and complex portrayal of heterosexual female desire and male bisexualities but has been criticized as 'not gay enough', while *The Island Tales* also failed to earn favourable reviews.⁴⁵ In 2001 Kwan made a triumphant comeback with *Lan Yu*, a film of unprecedented gay eroticism, abounding with allegorical resonance about the history and politics of contemporary China. Set in Beijing, the film revolves around the travails of a gay couple as the two protagonists are subject to the socioeconomic transformations of the last years of the post-Mao era (late 1980s) and the first decade of the post-Deng era (1990s). Although the allegorical dimension of the narrative is completely centred on China, it is the soundtrack and the distribution of the film that conjure up a trans-Chinese imaginary. The theme song of the film, 'Ni zenme shede wo nanguo', is a pop song released a decade earlier in Taiwan, and its omnipresence indicates the transmigration of culture and people prompted by the opening up of trade between Taiwan and China in the 1980s.⁴⁶ In addition, the production company, which from the very start expected the film to be banned in China, was aware it could compensate for this with an accumulation of critical acclaim from other Chinese communities and international markets. Curiously lacking the sophistication of Kwan's previous works such as *Yanzhi kou/Rouge*

47 Michael Berry, *Speaking in Images: Interviews with Contemporary Chinese Filmmakers* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2005), p. 442.

48 *Lan Yu* touches upon the expansion in commercial sex work in China following the rapid economic growth of China in the late 1980s. It portrays the gay relationship as cutting across class difference between the titular character, a poor college student from a farming village, and Han-dong, son of a former government official who rapidly amassed wealth by using his bureaucratic connections to cash in on the economic reforms. Ji Da-wei comments that the depiction of the relationship as transcending class is not escapist or antirealist but 'ultrarealist', in that it points to the rapid polarization of the poor and the rich as China turns to capitalism and class division. See Ji Da-wei, 'Hanwei Mao Zedong?' (Defending Mao Zedong) *Zhongguo Shibao (China Times)*, 25 December 2001, p. 39.

49 Bliss Cua Lim, 'Spectral times: the ghost film as historical allegory', *Positions: East Asia Cultural Critique*, vol. 9, no. 2 (2001), p. 292.

50 *Ibid.*, p. 314.

51 I owe this observation and the quote to *Screen!*'s anonymous reader.

(1988) and *Ruan lingyu/Center Stage* (1992), it has been hailed as one of Kwan's 'strongest works to date',⁴⁷ picking up five Taipei Golden Horse awards and achieving a top-ten bestseller ranking (in the category of Chinese-language films) in Taiwan in 2002. Although the visuals of the film are far removed from Chinese cultural fetishism, *Lan Yu* fully exploits the implications of geopolitical realism, presenting itself as an allegory of socioeconomic restructuring in the era of post-Mao reforms, while registering the economic order of the trans-Chinese imaginary both in its sound design and marketing.⁴⁸

The anachronistic and displaced use of an earlier Taiwanese pop song in *Lan Yu* or the anchoring of Chinese-language cinematic phenomena in preexisting gender and sexual forms in *Yang ± Yin* remind us of a theme that recurs in Kwan's works – nostalgia – one that often renders a film immediately allegorical, if not 'geopolitically realist'. As a textual doubling, nostalgia does not so much restore an original meaning as promote the allegorical contemplation of 'the now' through the past, so as to invest 'the now' or the allegorical object with new political meanings and affective values.⁴⁹ In her analysis of Stanley Kwan's *Rouge*, Bliss Cua Lim configures nostalgic allegory with the concept of history as a spectre or 'haunting', which demands the redressing of historical injustice or the reliving of indigenous cultural experiences long suppressed by coloniality. The female ghost's transgression of modern time consciousness, narrative linearity and logic, and rationality is read as the figuration of the anxieties of Hong Kong, threatened with the disappearance of its cultural identity in 1997 and caught between two colonizers/temporalities. The ghost genre of the 1980s, as has been conventionally argued, is Hong Kong cinema's answer to political and historical grievance.⁵⁰

Does *Yang ± Yin*, in its persistent revisiting of the past, attain a similar radical resonance? Does it, like *Rouge*, call us to a renewed orientation towards the past (as unsettling and haunting rather than stable or inert) and the future (as an unrealized or failed vision)? Does the film summon up elements particular to Hong Kong's hybridized culture that 'survive and persist in the cracks of the modern, capitalist order, and trouble the apparent smooth rationality of that order?'⁵¹ While I acknowledge the possibility of reading *Yang ± Yin* more closely within the frame of nostalgia and 1997, I wonder to what extent *Yang ± Yin* could be rescued from the problematic of sexual/gender politics or the myth of pan-Chinese culturalism that I have outlined here. Lying at the core of Lim's cogent argument is the discourse of the fantastic in the cinema, founded upon specific devices (parallel editing, superimposition and fades, and point-of-view or reaction shots) and cinema's capacity to resurrect not only the supernatural or the revenant, but a radical consciousness of time as enchanted, nonsecular, multiple and disjointed. Although *Yang ± Yin*, like *Rouge*, cuts across divergent spatiotemporal segments (that is, presented by diverse film clips or archival materials) by using some of the devices, the traversing of time and space is clearly and

52 Bliss, 'Spectral times,'
pp. 310–16.

'rationally' bracketed as 'looking back', as a process of historiographic documentation. Kwan's interviews with film professionals and his 'voice of reason(ing)' mark geopolitical and historical continuity rather than denoting the cohabitation of disparate temporalities in a fractured gaze or present. In seeing the potential of the ghost genre to radicalize the conception of historical consciousness, Lim also calls attention to the self-orientalizing tendency and confining sexual politics underlying nostalgic allegory.⁵² It is such a tendency and the troubling sexual politics (and national ideologies) that I wish to unravel and highlight in *Yang ± Yin: Gender in Chinese Cinema*.

I must thank those who have given me great friendship, critical feedback and thoughtful suggestions for revising the essay: David James, Marsha Kinder, Darrell Davis, Yeh Yueh-yu, Jackie Stacey, Brian Hu and *Screen's* anonymous readers.

Girl in the canoe: history, teleology and the work of star construction in the early roles of Marilyn Monroe

ESTHER SONNET

To assert the unique extent of Marilyn Monroe's dispersal across the mediated surfaces of celebrity culture is hardly novel. In a recent work of critical archaeology designed to uncover the 'cultural logics operant in the various rememberings of Marilyn', S. Paige Baty places Monroe at the apex of discursive dis/orderings of cultural politics in America.¹

Reasons for this include her 'status as an icon of femininity (both as female body and as a sign for "woman")', her chronological relationship to the 1960s, her association with the Kennedys, her "Americanness" ... for her relationship to simulation and the mass media, her status as mythico-religious figure, and the character of her problematic death'.²

There is an extraordinary proliferation of Monroe texts – biographies, true stories, eyewitness accounts, exposes, sexual histories, FBI dossiers, conspiracy theories, interviews, medical records, morgue reports, psychoanalytical case studies, documentaries, feminist criticism, plays, films, novels, art and poetry – united by their concern to identify the 'truth' of Marilyn, as sex, woman, body, intellectual, suicide, star, icon, simulation or as a 'real self'. As a 'representative character' mediating the 'very content and forms of representation itself', within American popular culture Monroe functions as a 'surface upon which different bodies, identities, and histories may be reconstructed'.³ Baty's argument that Monroe now forms a crucial site of cultural memory, configured as a form of popular political practice, is a sophisticated sublation of the composite stories that 'mark Marilyn as a body on which contestations over gender, the political character of culture, processes of simulation in

1 S. Paige Baty, *American Monroe: the Making of a Body Politic* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995).

2 Ibid., p. 20.

3 Ibid., pp. 24, 22.

Fig. 1.

The earliest identifiable appearance of Marilyn Monroe, in *Riders of the Whistling Pines* (John English, 1949).



4 Ibid., p. 20.

5 For a trenchant historical analysis of the popular cultural significance in the 1930s and 1940s of Gene Autry as film actor/producer, mogul media owner and music performer, see Peter Stanfield, *Horse Opera: the Strange History of the Singing Cowboy* (Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2002).

6 This is but one representative example – from John De Vitobry and Frank Tropea, *The Immortal Marilyn: the Depiction of an Icon* (London: Scarecrow, 2006) – which encapsulates the conception, shared by many biographers, of Monroe's star trajectory as ultimately transcendent.

7 Baty's study acknowledges the production of over five hundred Monroe texts and draws upon a vast number of biographies that operate within the narrativization of stardom outlined here.

contemporary America, current regimes of knowledge and power, and the forms of mass-mediated historical consciousness have been and continue to be written'.⁴ And yet, in a 1949 film *The Riders of the Whistling Pines* (John English), singing cowboy Gene Autry – in his sixty-second feature – takes on a group of villainous loggers who have deliberately released a tree disease into verdant pine forests so that they can justify stripping the valleys of their protected timber.⁵ The party of Autry's men is made up of ex-World War II pilots who deploy their flying skills to spray the forest with DDT and ward off the impending ransack. Pinned to the flight deck of pilot Joe's plane is a photograph of his young and attractive deceased wife – the earliest identifiable film appearance of Marilyn Monroe (figure 1). Used solely as a static facial image in a formulaic independent production, without even the distinction of an actor's movement or speech, the appearance testifies to Monroe's involvement at the lowest level of film acting work.

The distance between this moment of inconspicuousness and unexceptionality and a stardom of 'near-mythological status' could not be more clearly marked.⁶ How, though, does this trivial fragment of cinema history connect to Monroe's later apotheosis? In this respect Monroe's case is a uniquely productive one, since her rise from unknown bit part player to superstar has, in its repeated telling, become paradigmatic.⁷ My intention here is not to rehearse the overly familiar hagiographical accounts of Monroe's film career in terms of Norma Jean Baker/Mortensen's personal biography, nor is it to add to the account of her star history. Rather it is to examine the manifest disparity between Monroe's extensive form as a Hollywood bit part player and her subsequent stellar celebrity in terms of its challenge to the construction of knowledge within star studies.

The existence of a body of unregarded film work in which Monroe was patently not considered a star directs interest instead towards the largely unexamined assumptions in the ‘telling’ of star histories, especially towards a priori suppositions as to the significance of bit parts and early roles in the overall structure of a film career. Intuitively, early screen roles of extra, bit and small parts are connected to later star roles, but closer examination shows that a directly causal approach to ‘what comes first’ and ‘what comes later’ does not adequately define their relationship: simple temporal priority is not enough to explain the greater symbolic function played by bit parts in structuring accounts of star careers. To investigate this view more fully, I shall use an epistemological approach to outline how, in Monroe’s case, the bit part performs as an abstract category that predetermines the conceptual conditions under which her early screen roles can be known. I shall consider the ways in which extra, bit and small parts are connected to star roles, the significance of bit parts and early roles in the larger perspective of the overall structure of a film career, and the suppositions about their relationship made by dominant conceptions of film history organized around the work of stars.

Extra, bit and small parts are considered relevant to the conception of a star career through the relation between what comes first and what comes later. To illustrate the complexity of their possible configuration, the following list represents Monroe’s thirty-four recorded Hollywood film appearances, made over a fifteen-year period.

Dangerous Years (Arthur Pierson, 1947)

You Were Meant for Me (Lloyd Bacon, 1948)

Green Grass of Wyoming (Louis King, 1948)

Scudda Hoo! Scudda Hay! (Hugh Herbert, 1948)

The Riders of the Whistling Pines (John English, 1949)

Ladies of the Chorus (Phil Karlson, 1949)

Love Happy (David Miller, 1949)

A Ticket to Tomahawk (Richard Sale, 1950)

The Asphalt Jungle (John Huston, 1950)

The Fireball (Tay Garnett, 1950)

All About Eve (Joseph L. Mankiewicz, 1950)

Right Cross (John Sturges, 1950)

Home Town Story (Arthur Pierson, 1951)

As Young as You Feel (Harman Jones, 1951)

Love Nest (Joseph M. Newman, 1951)

Let's Make It Legal (Richard Sale, 1951)
Clash by Night (Fritz Lang, 1952)
We're Not Married! (Edmund Goulding, 1952)
Don't Bother to Knock (Roy Baker, 1952)
O. Henry's Full House (Henry Koster, 1952)
Monkey Business (Howard Hawks, 1952)
Niagara (Henry Hathaway, 1953)
How to Marry a Millionaire (Jean Negulesco, 1953)
Gentlemen Prefer Blondes (Howard Hawks, 1953)
River of No Return (Otto Preminger, 1954)
There's No Business Like Show Business (Walter Lang, 1954)
The Seven Year Itch (Billy Wilder, 1955)
Bus Stop (Joshua Logan, 1956)
The Prince and the Showgirl (Lawrence Olivier, 1957)
Some Like It Hot (Billy Wilder, 1959)
Let's Make Love (George Cukor, 1960)
The Misfits (John Huston, 1961)
Something's Got to Give (George Cukor, 1962)

If common sense suggests that the movement from *Dangerous Years* to *Something's Got To Give* might be understood through a linear and causal history in which Monroe's journey to stardom is structured through incremental advancement, I shall challenge this schema, and the place of bit parts within it. A conventional teleology might suggest that the 'story' of Monroe progresses through the ranks – from bit part to one-line extra, through small role to featured player, to costar and finally to star billing – each successive step contributing to the achievement of a qualitatively superior stage. In this schema, a very small role in *Right Cross* in 1950 is a logically necessary step in the advancement to *Let's Make Love* in 1960, marking incremental progression in Monroe's overall career development. The significance that the early roles assume in the organization of narratives of stardom indicates the importance of considering them structurally: that is, without regard for the actual particularities of Monroe's film appearances. In terms of their structural function in underpinning such a narrative, early roles are crucial in seeing star careers in terms of progression. If bit parts and early roles are made significant primarily in relation to narrative organization, they assume such significance according to the overall story of stardom in which they are embedded. And a concern to relate earlier to later – Monroe's non-

8 See Hayden White, 'The value of narrativity in the representation of reality', *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 7, no. 5 (1980), p. 28; Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, Vols. I–III, trans. Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1984, 1985, 1988); Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: a Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984); Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: an Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (London: Tavistock, 1974), and *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. Sheridan Smith (London: Tavistock, 1972); Keith Jenkins (ed.), *The Postmodern History Reader* (London: Routledge, 1997).

9 Barry King, 'Stardom as an occupation', in Paul Kerr (ed.), *The Hollywood Film Industry* (London: Routledge, 1986), pp. 155–84.

star roles to her later stellar condition – necessarily invokes a particular conception of history. Poststructuralist historians have long asserted the role of metanarratives in the production of historical meaning, and the thesis that historical narratives project coherence onto their historical fields is a compelling one.⁸ Monroe's trajectory from *The Riders of the Whistling Pines* to immortal mass-mediated icon necessarily draws reflexively upon narrative resources to anchor the historical passage from there to here. This problematic notion of progression operates to predefine Monroe's bit part/early film roles as historically significant, yet this very 'obviousness' invites further scrutiny.

The historical movement from extra to star presumes both a quantitative increase in screen time and a qualitative increase in significance of the screen role. However, such causal progression explains little about the mechanics of film stardom without its corollary – the increase in substance of screen role directly attributable to an increased recognition of the qualities of Monroe's personality. Her appearance for less than one-and-a-half minutes at the end of a late Marx Brothers' comedy caper in 1949, *Love Happy*, is a putative result of this recognition, leading to longer and more substantial roles by 1952, such as that in Howard Hawks's *Monkey Business*. However, Barry King's proposal for understanding stardom as an occupation, a specific effect of the industrial organization of film acting, works explicitly against this Zukorist view that stars mark the 'collective register' of popular choice.⁹ The consumer-sovereignty thesis that asserts the audience's power and influence in the recognition of stars is a pervasive one, obscuring the economic organization of a monopolistic film industry by construing stardom as the democratic product of the box office. It is an influential adjunct to the notion of progression as a historical movement towards stardom – in terms of more significant screen roles – resulting directly from public recognition and demand. It is thus possible to see that stardom in this mode requires a narrative of linear progression to propel Monroe from bit part player to star. This is, however, but the foundation upon which rests the more familiar structure of stardom as an enactment of discovery.

Stardom in these terms is an inexorable process impelled by the fortuitous revelation of natural talent. In this framework, the bit parts and early roles assume heightened significance in Monroe's film career, providing 'evidence' that her later star qualities were in place from the start. The understanding of stardom as a historical process is no longer simply linear but teleological – the end of Monroe's film career is in place at its beginning, and its telos is a fulfilment of an inevitable trajectory propelled by the natural star qualities already inherent in the bit part player. Monroe's final state of film stardom stands as a self-confirming truth – she was destined to achieve the status of star from the outset. So to consider those very early roles anew, of what real significance are appearances in *Home Town Story* or *As Young as You Feel* in the historical movement towards *Bus Stop* and the *The Misfits*?

Shifting inquiry into the nature of progression from causality to telos, what future state is betokened by a momentary appearance as a non-speaking static image?

A number of films between 1947 and 1950 form the initial phase of a narrative of Monroe's stardom which accounts for the extra and bit parts in teleological fashion. The first four titles in Monroe's filmography resulted from an initial studio contract with Twentieth Century-Fox, lasting less than a year, at \$75 per week, after which her option was dropped in autumn 1947. It would, though, grant too great a sense of coherence and amplitude to Monroe's earliest screen appearances to consider them as roles or even as *appearances* at all, since her scenes were subsequently excised from the final cuts of the musical *You Were Meant for Me*, rancher drama *Green Grass of Wyoming* and rural romance *Scudda Hoo! Scudda Hay!*. Few traces are left of her, beyond anecdote and catalogue records, in films united only by their status as those which excised and/or left uncredited the emergence of Monroe into Hollywood. Yet the very absence of Monroe works to incite a more intense scrutiny of the trace:

In the spring of 1947, Marilyn was finally given her first speaking role, a bit part in *Scudda Hoo! Scudda Hay!* A bit role differs from extra work in that the actor gets at least one line as well as an acknowledgement of the appearance by the studio. Graduating from extra work to bit parts can be an important step in an actor's career – many an aspiring star has been noticed by milking a bit into a memorable screen debut. Marilyn's big scene featured her character Betty dressed in a pinafore and walking down the steps of a small-town church. Betty passes the main character, played by June Haver, and says, 'Hi, Rad' to which Haver replies 'Hi, Betty'. Hardly earth-shattering material, but Marilyn was supposed to get at least one closeup. After she became a star, the 20th Century-Fox publicity department circulated the story that her only line in this film had ended up on the cutting room floor. Marilyn repeated the anecdote in 1955, on Edward R. Murrow's television interview program, *Person to Person*. However, according to film historian and noted Marilyn buff James Haspiel, the story is not true. Haspiel maintains that Marilyn's brief line remains intact in complete versions of the now-obscure *Scudda Hoo! Scudda Hay!* as does a shot of Marilyn and another starlet paddling a canoe. Neither shot appears in close-up, however, indicating that Marilyn's close-ups had been edited from the film.¹⁰

Woven into the future star trajectory, the putative appearance of Monroe as the 'girl in the canoe' or 'girl exiting church' marks a curious inversion: materially barely 'there', the lack of substance serves as a signifier of the plenitude yet to be discovered. Monroe's absence is converted into a presence as the origin of a cinematic history waiting to unfold. As Susan Doll confirms: 'Marilyn's part in this mediocre B-picture – remembered now only because of her appearance – did little

10 Susan Doll, 'Marilyn Monroe's first movie role', section heading for 'Marilyn Monroe's early career', *How Stuff Works*. <<http://entertainment.howstuffworks.com/marilyn-monroe-early-career.htm>> [accessed 11 November 2009]. Excerpted from Doll's *Marilyn: Her Life and Legend* (London: Omnibus Press 1990).

for her career'.¹¹ It is a matter of debate whether there is even an appearance at all, but that does not detract from the alteration of *Scudda Hoo! Scudda Hay!*'s contemporary historical significance through its fetishistic relocation within the Monroe star narrative. Significantly, this film's importance in the star narrative pivots on the missing closeup shot that might mark the shift from extra to bit part player. Even at this micro-level, the absence of the closeup carries the suggestion of thwarted progression and, with that, a lost opportunity for the later discovery and recognition. Yet the first recorded closeup had appeared earlier the same year, in *Dangerous Years*. According to the *Monthly Film Bulletin* of August 1948, the film was a juvenile delinquency movie with a 'Freudian theory' – that 'the first few years of a child's life are more important than his future environment, social and financial status' – as its basic theme. Starring Dead End Kid William Halop, newly returned from war service as a ringleader luring a teenage group into 'waging a crime war against their community', *Dangerous Years* reportedly includes the screen debut of Monroe as a waitress, with the closeup earning her fourteenth billing out of fifteen actor credits. However, within a few days of completion of filming and well before release, Fox declined to renew her contract. From March to September 1948, itinerant extra Monroe signed with Columbia Pictures on a deal that produced only one film before her option was again terminated. In this Monroe's career defied the logic of star career development as qualitative progression and/or as discovery, since she was returned to bit parts (and in the Autry film to even less) after a significant feature role in the backstage musical burlesque *Ladies of the Chorus* (1949).

Debate as to whether the earlier bit parts are materially extant only serves to underline the strength of the retrospective impulse to locate an authentic point of Monroe's 'origin' in cinema. Again, teleological revisioning emphasized Monroe's connection to *The Riders of the Whistling Pines*. There was no screen credit for Monroe in this film, so why does the film catalogue of the British Film Institute now accord her a full cast listing for her moments on screen as a photograph? This is a subsequent implantation of significance that stands in marked contrast to the utterly minor and forgettable use of a studio publicity photo to signify the absence of a pilot's wife. Monroe's very small appearance in *The Fireball* is a similar case. Based on an original story by Tay Garnett and Horace McCoy, *The Fireball* was the first film made by Thor Productions, co-owned by Garnett and Bert Friedlob, with Garnett also directing. Garnett's autobiography suggests that producer Friedlob owned the International Roller Speedway, and that the film emerged from his desire to make a fictional film of its sporting spectacles. Thor Productions' original billing makes no mention of Monroe, offering instead a cast-list including Beverley Tyler and introducing Glenn Corbett. Monroe's role is very small, yet the rerelease of the film by Warner Home Video in 1996 places the following text next to a colourized photograph, supposedly of Rooney and Monroe as they

12 VHS cover for the 1996 rerelease by Warner Home Video of *The Fireball* (emphasis added).

13 Thomas Harris, 'The building of popular images: Grace Kelly and Marilyn Monroe', *Studies in Public Communication* (1957), reprinted in Christine Gledhill (ed.), *Stardom: Industry of Desire* (London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 40–44.

14 Reissued by Random House in 2007.

appear together in the film: 'Mickey spins and Marilyn wows in a roller world drama'. A technique for retrospectively importing what can only be of future significance relocates *The Fireball* within the career of Monroe: it 'blazes with three Hollywood legends (Mickey Rooney, Pat O'Brien, Marilyn Monroe) and its slam 'em-over-the-handrail, roller-speedway realism' and is 'full of star wattage'. Rooney is the 'me-first kid who knocks the banked-oval world on its keester and later discovers his humanity when life decks him with a hard-right called polio'. O'Brien, 'in his familiar cleric's collar, looms like a stricken conscience as he regards the kid's ballooning arrogance' and, most significantly, 'in a small role', Marilyn 'gives notice of *what is to be*, standing out like a luminous flower in crowd segments and turning dialogue into honey in other scenes. Grab the popcorn, movie fans. Time for stargazing.'¹²

This banal but representative movement illustrates that the recovery of Monroe's bit parts within a teleological frame depends on an untheorized and irreversible equation – that later stardom accounts for the significance of bit parts, yet the bit parts cannot in themselves rationalize future stardom. Thus bit parts are determined within the narrative of a star career as sites of oscillation, existing in the play between recognition of the unexceptionality and meagreness of the material and its subsequent configuring as consequential substance. The sheer force of teleology raises fundamental questions as to whether early roles can be approached in a way that is not influenced by subsequent star status. From this provisional contention, it is possible to follow what I would term the logic of aggregation that teleology confers on narratives of stardom in at least three key ways: in attempts to reconcile the bit part within constructivist accounts of Monroe's stardom, epitomized in the cine-sociological work of Thomas Harris; in the use of bit parts to establish incremental stages of measurement which raise the possibility that the significance of small roles lies also in their organization of the commercial metrics of film celebrity; and in the limits that structuring film history through the concept of the star career places upon the film historian concerned with understanding any early career film work within (rather than abstracted from) its proper sociohistorical fabric.

Thomas Harris was an early proponent of a constructionist model of film stardom, writing a short but dense essay for the positivist journal *Studies in Public Communication* in 1957.¹³ 'The building of popular images: Grace Kelly and Marilyn Monroe' offered to expose then-popular notions of stardom founded on 'discoveries' of 'talent'. Making what appeared to be an original application of communications research, the essay proposes an understanding of star personalities as phenomenal effects of mass media practices rather than individual, unique and authentic persons. The date of publication would align it with the paradigm of North American media research most closely associated with Vance Packard in his 1957 book *The Hidden Persuaders* – a popular revelation of the secret uses in advertising of depth psychology, motivational research and subliminal tactics for mass persuasion.¹⁴ That,

15 Harris, 'The building of popular images', p. 40.

16 Ibid. p. 40.

17 Ibid., pp. 40–41.

18 Ibid., p. 41.

for Harris, the American mass mind in the mid 1950s was determined by perpetual exposure to the media indicates then-current views of mass communication as an instrument of social domination operating via hidden forms of unconscious manipulation. With popular images of stars in view, his essay outlines a framework within which the media analyst might reconstruct the image-making process. Harris draws upon a range of sources available between 1951 and 1956, including film reviews, television 'pre-sale' campaigns, movie fan magazine features and studio press books, alongside viewings of the films of Grace Kelly and Marilyn Monroe, to assert that the role of 'modern publicity methods' – the 'totality' of 'publicity build-up' – is deliberately calculated to 'make the personality better known to a public which will respond by attending the screen hero's starring films'.¹⁵ The mildly Pavlovian terms of Harris's view of mass film audiences, however, should not detract from his insight into the media mechanics of popular star formation. Against Hollywood's intense promotion of stardom as a process of discovery, Harris neatly identifies the aspects of studio promotional apparatus that both control and fabricate its 'personality' through marketing, advertising, features, press promotion and exploitation practices. On one side is the intertextual confinement of a performer to successive film roles that serve primarily to enhance a narrow star stereotype: the 'successful stars have been those whose appeal can be catalogued into a series of traits, associations and mannerism'.¹⁶ On the other are the multiple sites of intermediality such as fan magazines, radio, television and newspapers that support the 'total process' for 'communicating . . . symbolic images to the public'.¹⁷ Between strict film role stereotyping and intermedial fabrication of offscreen life, studios were enabled to supervise the public passage of the bit part player to star personality. The process begins with

a preliminary publicity build-up starting months or even years before the star is seen on the screen. Frequent devices used in such a build-up are a 'discovery' usually concocted by studio publicists, a series of glamour pictures sent to all the print media, a rumoured romance with another star already known to the public or a rumoured starring role in a major film. This publicity finds a primary outlet in syndicated Hollywood gossip columns and movie fan magazines. When an actor or actress is actually cast in a film, the studio assigns a 'unit man' to 'plant' items about the personality in these places as well as national magazines and Sunday newspaper supplements. A network television appearance is also a highly coveted plum in the studio 'pre-sale' campaign for both the picture and the personality.¹⁸

Thus before and during a film's production all publicity emanates from Hollywood: after filming, the New York publicity offices of the studio 'handle publicity through the distribution-exhibition phase' and the 'development of national advertising and the creation of stunts and merchandise tie-ins to exploit the picture'.

Harris sees Marilyn Monroe as a *prima facie* case, and he cites as evidence the first feature article of any length on Monroe to appear in an American national magazine (*Collier's Weekly*, 8 September 1951):

While Miss Monroe was still in the starlet stage, studio publicists managed to plan[t] a feature in *Collier's*. It is interesting to note that in this initial piece, *the principal thematic associations later integral to the popular image all appear*. . . . Publicists concentrated on her breathy voice, her 'horizontal' walk, her revealing dress, her half-closed eyes and half-opened mouth. The off-stage image was also perpetuated through the device of her quotes and quips, known to the trade as 'Monroeisms'. Utilisation of this matter-of-fact, humorous approach to sex is consistent with her screen stereotype. It is in keeping with having the standard studio practice of having Monroe undress, shower, say and sing suggestive things in her film roles.¹⁹

19 Ibid., p. 43. Emphasis added.

Assessing the finely calibrated process by which popular images in the 1950s were fabricated, Harris also points to the importance of relational differentiation in the determination of star value: Monroe's specific semiotic value is secured in relation to other personalities such as Grace Kelly. Kelly's personality was just as constructed as Monroe's, he argues, but founded instead upon values of gentility, politeness and elegance, with patrician and ladylike qualities that anchored her image in a 'concept of respectability' ideologically compatible with the middle-class female readership of domestic/fashion magazines such as *McCall's*, *Vogue*, *Ladies Home Journal* and *Good Housekeeping*. The stereotyping of Monroe is set actively against Kelly's, and intensifies Monroe's identification with signifiers of a sexuality objectified by patriarchal male desire. Furthermore, Monroe's extrafilmic and prefilmic typification was already highly developed through the public exposure and publicity gained from regular work as cover girl, model, nude calendar girl and photographic pinup. As an available, sexualized, proletarian girl, aimed at the lower-class male readers of *Esquire* and *Coronet*, 'it was the playmate image which, nourished by acceptance of her pictures, skyrocketed her to an almost allegoric position as the symbolic object of illicit male sexual desire'.²⁰

20 Ibid., p. 42.

This kind of constructionist analysis aims to go behind the self-representation of Hollywood's publicity apparatus and reveal the cultural work entailed in star fabrication. Harris is acute in illustrating how Hollywood worked through stereotyping in order to fabricate a type offered to the public as an authentic self and in the use of multimedial sites in the process of star construction and distribution. Yet the epistemological terms upon which this is secured bear further examination, especially as the answer to how Monroe's early bit parts are to be understood within this schema depends on making those terms explicit.

Centrally, Harris's analysis is underpinned by a synchronic view of the operations of Hollywood's star publicity machine and this is vital in

21 Ibid., p. 40.

22 Ibid., pp. 40–41.

23 Ibid., p. 42. Emphasis added.

securing the point that mass communications work to influence the populace through the ‘totality’ of ‘reinforcement of other media’.²¹ Hollywood publicity exerts undue control over the public’s choice of star personas by extending its operation to disseminate its established stereotypes throughout the mass media. The success of star fabrications relies on the concerted use of all available avenues of publicity, advertising and exploitation to circulate ‘reinforcing’ images. The building of a star persona through a film career alone is not possible, since it is the place of those films within the synchronous ‘channels for communicating . . . symbolic images to the public’ that defines their significance.²² In this context, it is clearer why Harris contends that Monroe’s later star meaning was fully predetermined as a ‘comprehensible image’ prior to achieving feature billing in any film, and also why he sees no reason to distinguish between filmic and extrafilmic personality because for him the persona deployed in film roles was only the ‘natural outgrowth’ of the ‘*pre-movie experience*’.²³

Contrary to models of stardom based on the concept of successive progression, the subsequent characteristics of Monroe’s star personality were already deliberately formed and implanted at a much earlier stage of her career. The logical conclusion of Harris’s argument is that ‘Monroe’ is better understood as a totality of standardized components (breasts, gestures, lips, legs, walk) that were moved freely across media sites. Reduced in this way to the performance of a limited range of predetermined signifiers of objectified sexuality, there is no meaningful ground upon which to distinguish extra, bit part and featured roles from star billing since, by this account, whether in bit part or star role, Monroe could never be more than the sum of hypertrophied parts that were utilized, in smaller or greater quantities, throughout her film career.

Taking all this together, we might thus question the progressive approach to stardom. Although a synchronically derived analysis of Monroe’s personality dispenses with the narrative of discovery in favour of a commercial, synchronic and differential model, it also offers a peculiarly static, inflexible and overly consistent account of the formation and acceptance of popular images. It is interesting that Harris should conclude his essay with a recognition that both Kelly and Monroe were at the time of writing undergoing ‘role modifications’ that might not be accepted by their public. As both ‘have been so consistently typecast as to arouse certain expectations from their publics’, it is

problematical if either or both of them can successfully assume their new changes of status and still maintain the popularity with a public which elevated them to a position that made such changes possible.

Can the audience which accepted Marilyn Monroe as a good-natured sex symbol tolerate her association with intellectuals and her marriage to one of their number?²⁴

24 Ibid., p. 44.

In answer, he muses that ‘only the passage of time will tell’. The semantic fixity of the preconstituted stereotype, and the public’s

reluctance to modify its expectations of this, indicates a highly functionalist understanding of popular images. This is a theoretical corollary of the total effectiveness Harris ascribes to Hollywood's publicity machinery, from its early formulation of stereotype through its deliberate manipulation of publicity and exploitation to the assured establishment of a popular star persona. The myth of the discovery of natural talent is subordinate to the power and pervasiveness of media influence to impose unambiguous star images upon a credulous and inflexible mass media audience. Yet the deterministic, teleological principle nonetheless organizes this narrative of stardom – what comes later (Monroe's stardom) is but an unfolding of its earliest conception. Harris's selection of Marilyn Monroe – by 1957 widely acknowledged to have achieved star status – to illustrate the thesis is self-confirming.

Harris's account of star fabrication ascribes to the star personality a set of fixed and unvarying attributes that operate homogenously; he confines the public's reception of star images to one of acceptance, and assumes Hollywood publicity managers to be agents of infallible intent. Consequently, what his account cannot acknowledge is that Monroe might, as late as 1953 or 1954, still have been one of the historically high percentage of failed attempts to create star personalities from bit part or early career actors. For example, in a *Motion Picture Herald* article of 1952, Monroe marks the confluence of two of the film industry's metrics, of economic success and of the more nebulous future popular appeal.²⁵ Combining the 'industry's oldest and unanimously accredited measure of talent values', the twenty-one-year-old Money-Making-Stars poll, with the Stars-of-Tomorrow poll, the *Motion Picture Herald* proffers a pseudo-scientific foundation for its prediction: 'both polls are conducted by sealed-ballot direct-mail and present the aggregate findings of the nation's theatre operators, independent and circuit, in close and constant contact with the cash customers'. The statistical rigour of this 'practical pulse-taking procedure' provides data for confidence in the motion picture theatre owners' prediction of future success: 'Although the hazards of life apply in show business as elsewhere, not to say more so, more than 50 per cent of the 110 winners of Top Ten prominence in the 11 previous Stars-of-Tomorrow have gone on to above-title billing'.²⁶ But while the article celebrates Monroe's resounding victory and intimates that this is due to her own star qualities, it simultaneously undercuts the view that Marilyn herself accounts for her popularity with both circuit and independent exhibitors.

This year's Number One Star-of-Tomorrow was voted into that position by the biggest margin any of the poll's leaders have achieved, and that includes the 1950 win of the sensational Martin & Lewis. Since she's been out in fewer pictures, on the screen, than the Martin–Lewis duo had before winning, the Monroe majority must be attributed in considerable part to the prodigious promotional activities of some extremely able publicists, professional and volunteer, in her behalf.²⁷

²⁵ William R. Weaver, 'Showmen select ten best stars of tomorrow', *Motion Picture Herald*, 27 September 1952, pp. 12, 14, 16.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 12, 14.

Acknowledging the role played by studio publicity and promotional activity in foregrounding Monroe, the *Motion Picture Herald's* claim to privileged knowledge of the market's actual tastes is qualified by the conclusion that the results may perhaps be unfairly influenced by external promotional activities of publicists. Weaver concludes that 'among them, and with an assist now and then by their subject, they have advanced her to a position in public interest interpreted by the newspress as *page 1 – must*'.²⁸ The terms come close to confirming Harris's thesis but the commercial context of the review actually runs counter to it: from the perspective of the quotidian reality of film distributors/exhibitors, the media reinforcement practices he attempts to demythologize are hardly a revelation. Weaver's summary of the showmen's polls differs in another crucial respect: the future development of star trajectories cannot be assured. The uncertainty and unpredictability of even Monroe's position at this point is historically confirmed by the lack of comparable historical impact of other Stars-of-Tomorrow actors that are named alongside her such as Danny Thomas, David Wayne, Marge and Gower Champion, and Forrest Tucker, with the addition of Michael Rennie and Millard Mitchell from Canada. Noted within the period, perhaps, these figures are now known only to aficionados of early 1950s cinema. On the other hand, the potential of Debbie Reynolds, Leslie Caron, Rock Hudson, Audie Murphy and Charlton Heston is converted into star careers of greater significance. As a future Star-of-Tomorrow, even post-*Niagara* in 1953 Marilyn Monroe is still waiting to cross the Rubicon to authentic stardom as defined by the terms of the poll – above-title billing – with, according to the poll, only a slightly higher than fifty per cent prospect of doing so. It is evident that the polls were correct in their prediction, but that is a retrospective confirmation of a process that was by no means certain at the time. The need for audience metrics to measure fine variations in the market of 'talent values' is in itself admission by the industry of the volatility of public taste, of capriciousness at the box office that no amount of calculated publicity could channel or stabilize. Thus historical conditions of real uncertainty are converted by the teleological trajectory into a retrospective narrative that admits nothing of the instability of the process of star construction.

It is difficult to separate the early roles within a film career from their function within the wider classification of stardom. Within progressive teleologies, projected periodizations work to secure evidence for a career's incremental development. Fundamental to this, both conceptually and commercially, is the determination of when a star becomes a star – at what point is stardom actually achieved. Identifying the tipping-point for Monroe's shift, transition or break into stardom has been a vital issue for magazine articles, film reviews and trade press both past and present, as it promises a means of demarcating stardom through a sequential shift from insignificance (small roles) to significance (star roles). The requirement to define when and where Monroe moves from bit or small part player to bona fide star suggests that the conceptual

importance of early career roles lies in their influence on organizing the metrics of stardom. Considered chronologically, Monroe's film work from 1947 to 1962 suggests the task of differentiating early roles from tip-over billing or even star features ought to be straightforward: even with no knowledge of the substance of the roles themselves, extra and bit parts must surely come first and star roles later. The tipping-point for Monroe might be *The Asphalt Jungle* (1950), *All About Eve* (1950), *Don't Bother to Knock* (1952) or perhaps, at the latest, *Niagara* (1953). Yet there is no evidence that the roles were perceived in this way, nor could they be, since retrospective ordering alone can situate them as transitional roles within the narrative of the achievement of authentic film stardom. Located between the phases of the bit or small part and of the star role, Monroe's film appearances from 1949 to 1952 provide material upon which notions of crossover can be projected as the necessary prelude to full stardom in *Gentleman Prefer Blondes* (1953) and *How to Marry a Millionaire* (1953). Yet even within this phase of crossover, only some films are generally recuperated while others, such as *Right Cross* (1950), *Home Town Story* (1951) or *We're Not Married* (1952), are not. This indicates the problematic nature of construing these film roles as coming after the bit parts and before the star roles, since some of these less recuperable middle-period titles are barely separable in scale and impact from Monroe's smallest roles. Thus the middle period of Monroe's career does not furnish evidence to support the qualitative differentiation between stages required to underpin a teleological narrative of progression. *The Asphalt Jungle* and *Right Cross* were both released in 1950, yet in the latter Monroe appears fleetingly as a boxing promoter's girlfriend while the former marks the site of passage: 'though *The Asphalt Jungle* was not her first film, Howard Hawks credited [John] Huston with having discovered Marilyn'.²⁹ But in terms of Monroe's contribution to the films, the material basis for this distinction is not obvious. The elusive matter of temporally determining when Monroe becomes a star is clearly inseparable from qualitative questions about the material foundation of categories of stardom. This might recommend a shift of interest to those criteria that measure when that status has been reached. What, in other words, might be said to confirm its achievement?

As an economic hierarchy structuring the corporate ownership/exchange of acting personnel, demarcations between bit part, small part, feature player and star are evidently the result of legal negotiation within commercial contracts. Title billing might, for example, be held to provide tangible evidence of incremental progression. Fine variations in star status can be read through the industry's billing practices, particularly around opening credits and publicity posters: placement order, ranking through font style, size, colour and layout, above- or below-title billing, the use of 'introducing' or 'with' to signal status, and so on. Within the teleological narrative of stardom, improvements in billing appear to support incremental notions of stardom; as the material embodiment of recognition, the progressive repositioning of Monroe's

29 Learning, *Marilyn Monroe*, p. 311.

name throughout her film career provides graphic confirmation of star quality. But rather than measuring star progression, billing practices *produce* status. Reversing star studies' usual direction of influence, credits can be understood not as recognition of existing star quality but as an index of industrial negotiations between coalitions of vested production interests – the result of legal contracts formed out of temporary agreements between studio attorneys, agents, legal advisers and actors. This perspective on the commercial construction of stardom might explain Monroe's disparate levels of status in the crossover period – in 1952, *We're Not Married* and *O. Henry's Full House* as well as *Don't Bother to Knock* and *Clash by Night* – and serve as an indication of the historical susceptibility of acting careers to the vagaries of Hollywood's internal transactions. The force of the teleological narrative of stardom overrides full recognition of Monroe's location within pragmatic, circumstantial and unpredictable film productions in favour of a stable but mythological explanation that binds historical discontinuity through the figure of the star. One example of where this has been retrospectively achieved is in the complex practices of commercial rereleasing: the subsequent television release of Columbia's *Ladies of the Chorus* in the early 1950s took licence with the studio's original ranking practices by listing Monroe above the title. This was an obvious commercial tactic to capitalize on her celebrity.³⁰ However, given that credit status and billings are subject to a *posteriori* alteration in various circuits of exhibition – theatrical film release, television, video and DVD box sets – such epistemological reframing of Monroe makes it highly questionable that they provide objective measures of status. A similar process of reframing Monroe's obscurity is noted by Doll: 'In 1952, when Marilyn was making a name for herself, Columbia lifted her vocal performance of "Everybody Needs a Da-Da-Daddy" from *Ladies of the Chorus* and spliced it into a war film entitled *Okinawa*'.³¹

Historian Hayden White suggests that the use of narrative models 'arises out of a desire for real events to display the coherence, integrity, fullness and closure of an image of life that is and can only be imaginary', and he asks: 'Does the world really represent itself to perception in the form of well-made stories, with central subjects, proper beginnings, middles and ends, and a coherence that permits us to see "the end" in every beginning?'³² While the early work of Marilyn Monroe exists as a matter of historical record, my primary concern here has been to illustrate the role played by the bit part in ordering the narrative of dominant conceptions of Hollywood stardom and in the larger disciplinary formation of star studies. As an abstract category of progression, bit parts are readily taken up in the formation of a specific narrative of star history; further, they are conceptualized within the boundaries that are set upon the field of film in order that Hollywood production history can be organized around the work of stars. The perception that Monroe's early screen roles are connected to her later ones is more specifically an effect

30 Note in American Film Institute Online Index entry for *Ladies of the Chorus*.

31 Susan Doll, 'Monroe signs with Columbia Pictures', section heading of 'Marilyn Monroe's early career'. *How Stuff Works*. <<http://entertainment.howstuffworks.com/marilyn-monroe-early-career2.htm>> [accessed 11 November 2009]. *Okinawa* was a Columbia production of 1952.

32 Hayden White, 'The value of narrativity in the representation of reality', *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 7, no. 5 (1980), p. 28.

of an adherence to a film history narrated through star biography. The mobilization of a star signifier produces an effect of coherence: incongruent films emerging from a diverse range of production contexts – differences between studios, financing, legal contracts, narrative and genre – are united by the shared feature of the star name. ‘Monroe’ in this way functions to provide a self-evident logic to otherwise disparate productions, integrating films by biography and against the grain of historical heterogeneity. Narratives of stardom plotted as discovery of natural talent and/or intentional manipulation derive their explanatory value from acceptance of the validity of the organization of historical meaning through the biographically-based conception of the stellar individual. The case of Marilyn Monroe brings more sharply into relief the dependence of notions of stardom on a specific narrative organization of historical meaning. White famously disputes the veracity of traditional historical explanation on the grounds that the ‘notion that real events possess the formal attributes we tell about imaginary events could only have its origins in wishes, daydream, reveries’.³³ The myth of stardom secured as a teleological unfolding of historical reason is a primary instance of such evidently invested fabulation.

The studio photograph that derived from Monroe’s six-month contract with Columbia Pictures (a distributor of Autry Productions films) and is used in *The Riders of the Whistling Pines* is an origin of sorts: even though not chronologically first, its contemporary value – except perhaps to Autry completists – resides solely with its significance within Monroe’s filmography. As such, the image works as a highly condensed sign, concentrated by an act of retrospective projection and thereby constitutively reified. This is a succinct illustration of the problem faced in trying to work outside of teleological assumptions: can Monroe’s early roles be approached in ways that respect their historical moment, in ways that are not accounted for by her subsequent star status? Hence the cost of locating *The Riders of the Whistling Pines* within the narrative of Monroe’s career becomes apparent – what does this do to an understanding of the historical heterogeneity of Hollywood film production, of the original contemporary significance of the types of film in which she was deployed? On what other terms is it possible to revisit the fleeting photograph that marks one point of Monroe’s entry into the domain of cinematic images, if not in terms of a reconstructed future star trajectory? Like *The Fireball*, *Ladies of the Chorus*, *Don’t Bother to Knock* and *Niagara*, *Riders of the Whistling Pines* offers rich material for more thorough investigation of the historical conditions within which Monroe’s early appearances in Hollywood were made. Located within the postwar period of significant social and industrial transition – the Paramount antitrust legislation that challenged the studio-based star system, the threat to Hollywood from television and profound shifts in the eroticization of mass-produced images of women – Monroe’s bit parts and early roles are complex representations of realignments in the cultural organization of sexuality and specific mutations in female

stardom that crystallize around the notion of glamour. This points to a way of understanding the use of Monroe's image in a historically grounded fashion that relates her film appearances to their moment of production and circulation. Nonetheless, such a project must contend with the fact that Monroe's early career is not readily available as an unmediated period before stellar ubiquity.

Monroe's case is unparalleled in its characteristic capacity to disorder logical notions of time and place. Returning to the terms of Baty's analysis, Monroe is now 'never fully situated in any one time or place' but 'reproduced and disseminated ad infinitum as towel, food item, book, photograph, 1950s starlet, 1990s corpse, ashtray, Madonna, calendar girl, greeting cards, etc.'.³⁴ The temporal collapse of the past and the present extends Monroe far beyond the actuality of her cinematic and physical lives, as both continue well beyond their historical moment. In contemporary terms, Monroe occasions a 'dislocation and relocation of the present' through the current recirculation of images drawn across history from the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s. Her image 'has no one original location. It has no single history, no point of origin, no final end: it lives as copy, resurrected as image through the forces of mass-mediated reproduction'.³⁵ The difficulty of situating Monroe in meaningful historical time within this perspective is certain. However, my concern has been to identify ways in which Monroe's early career is historical and to outline the terms that would effectively place Monroe within film history without reinforcing the assumption both of stardom as teleology or of the atemporal circulations of hypermediated celebrity.

34 Baty, *American Monroe*, p. 21.

35 Ibid., p. 34.

A town called Riddle: excavating Todd Haynes's *I'm Not There*

JACOB SMITH

In the weeks after the release of Todd Haynes's film inspired by 'the music and many lives' of Bob Dylan, *I'm Not There* (2007), a consensus emerged that of the seven different 'Dylans' portrayed on screen, it was Richard Gere's 'Billy the Kid' that was the least successful. Critics had qualms about it, on the Internet Movie Database fans consistently gave Gere low marks, and the press leaked accounts that distributor Harvey Weinstein had wanted the sequence cut from the film.¹ Gere depicted Dylan from his Basement Tapes period, when the mercurial singer mined what Greil Marcus has called the 'old, weird America'.² Though opaque to many viewers, this section of Haynes's film has much to tell us about techniques for visualizing popular music, and challenges us to make fresh connections between Dylan's career, the history of recorded sound, and the role of phonograph records in collective memory. Haynes turns Dylan's most obscure recordings into a cinematic place – a town called 'Riddle' – and in the process demonstrates the importance of mise-en-scene in screen adaptations of recorded music. But the name Riddle points to earlier fictional American towns with close ties to the record industry. Excavating those layers of reference enables us to situate both *I'm Not There* and Dylan's Basement Tapes within a larger history of media memory.

Critical discussion of Haynes's ambitious film has tended to revolve around several topics: the director's skewing of biopic conventions; the use of six actors to depict the different phases of Dylan's career; Cate Blanchett's remarkable crossgender performance as the 1966 Dylan; and Haynes's account of how he got approval from Dylan to make the film in

¹ Michael Gray writes: 'I had qualms only about the [Gere] section ... all the scenes with Richard Gere [lack] the certainty of the rest. This particular weird America starts to look too much like the unconvincing marketing job that was the front cover of the official Basement Tapes double-LP suddenly come to theatrical life.' Michael Gray, 'It ain't me, babe?', *Sight and Sound*, vol. 18, no. 1 (2008), p. 24. On Harvey Weinstein's reservations, see Robert Sullivan, 'This is not a Bob Dylan movie', *New York Times*, 7 October 2007, p. 58–65, 84, 89–90.

² Greil Marcus, *Invisible Republic* (New York, NY: Henry Holt, 1997).

- 3 As Robert B. Ray has pointed out, recording allowed for a shift in the ontological status of music, most dramatically in genres such as rock'n'roll, which made the record the central work and not the written score or live performance. See Robert B. Ray, *The Avant-Garde Finds Andy Hardy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), p. 72. Similarly, Theodore Gracyk bases his aesthetics of rock'n'roll on the perception of timbre. Unlike western art music, which placed a premium on form and structural complexity, 'rock is a music of very specific sound qualities and their textural combination. Specific sounds are as central to the music as are specific colors in painting.' Gracyk offers Bob Dylan as a key illustration of this argument. See Theodore Gracyk, *Rhythm and Noise: an Aesthetics of Rock* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996), pp. 61, 13.
- 4 The Basement Tapes are Dylan's most esoteric recordings, circulating for many years only on bootleg recordings before an official, albeit incomplete, collection of the sessions was released in 1975. One explanation for the lack of appeal of this section with viewers, then, is that it is intentionally obscure in order to reflect the recordings that are its source material.
- 5 Carol Vernallis, *Experiencing Music Video* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2004), p. 77.

the first place. Press coverage of *I'm Not There* has made little mention of the techniques by which Haynes visually depicts Dylan's recordings. This is an unfortunate lacuna since, as the film's opening credits indicate, representing Dylan's music is as important as conveying the singer's biography. Indeed, the film offers a distinctive approach to the combination of music and image, whereby the work of visual representation is equally dedicated to an artist's recordings and life. The style of the most prominent form of visualizing pop music – the music video – is noticeably absent from the film: there is only one clearly 'videoesque' sequence in *I'm Not There*, which accompanies the song 'Ballad of a Thin Man'. Nevertheless, Haynes, like many directors working in music video, displays a stunning knack for visually depicting musical timbre. As has often been noted, timbre – the specific quality or texture of a sound – is a particularly important aspect of much of the recorded popular music of the past century, since sound recording allowed timbre to be preserved and considered in a radically new way.³ It is fitting, then, that much of the meaning of *I'm Not There* is created by matching the sonic textures of the various phases of Dylan's recorded work with distinctive film styles from roughly contemporary periods: Federico Fellini's crisp black-and-white, wide-angle cinematography from 8½ (1963) is paired with the 'wild, thin mercury sound' heard on Dylan's mid-1960s electric period; saturated colours and framing reminiscent of early Godard accompany mid-1970s records such as *Blood on the Tracks*; and the washed-out tones of revisionist Westerns such as Robert Altman's *McCabe and Mrs. Miller* (1971) correspond to Dylan's 1967 basement recordings in Woodstock, New York with backing band the Hawks (soon to be renamed the Band).⁴

But the film takes more from revisionist Westerns than just the texture of the image: it also borrows the setting of a frontier town. The creation of this cinematic town provides a framework for the prominent display of visual analogues to musical timbre such as set design, costume and props. In fact the Gere sequence is largely a matter of setting a scene irrespective of establishing a strong narrative plank, and so operates like music videos which, as Carol Vernallis argues, often use setting to reflect 'a song's sonic features'.⁵ Haynes transposes the timbre and texture of the Basement Tapes to wooden farmhouses, pale curtains, frayed books, dirt roads and frontier costumes: images that are well suited to the lo-fi sound, traditional repertoire and handmade, casual feel of the Basement Tapes.

In addition to signaling the importance of timbre in translating recorded music to the screen, the use of a cinematic town is particularly fitting for the Basement Tapes. An important influence on *I'm Not There* was Marcus's analysis of this period of Dylan's career in his book, *Invisible Republic*. Marcus discusses the Basement Tapes in relation to Harry Smith's sprawling six-album set, *Anthology of American Folk Music*, released in 1952 by Folkways Records, and argues that Smith's influential collection of 1920s and 1930s folk recordings created a

- 6 Marcus, *Invisible Republic*, p. 104.
- 7 Ibid., p. 128.
- 8 Pierre Nora, 'Between memory and history: *Les lieux de mémoire*', *Representations*, no. 26 (1989), p. 7. Peter Carrier, 'Places, politics and the archiving of contemporary memory in Pierre Nora's *Les Lieux de mémoire*', in Susannah Radstone (ed.), *Memory and Methodology* (Oxford: Berg, 2000), p. 40.
- 9 John Storey, 'The articulation of memory and desire: from Vietnam to the war in the Persian Gulf', in Paul Grainge (ed.), *Memory and Popular Film* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), p. 104. Alison Landsberg argues that the modern media have made possible an 'unprecedented circulation of images and narratives about the past', fostering what she calls 'prosthetic memory'. Alison Landsberg, 'Prosthetic memory: the ethics and politics of memory in an age of mass culture', in Grainge (ed.), *Memory and Popular Film*, p. 146.
- 10 In his history of the recording industry, William Howland Kenney argues that recorded sound was instrumental 'in an ongoing process of individual and group recognition in which images of the past and the present could be mixed in an apparently timeless suspension that often seemed to defy the relentless corrosion of historical change'. William Howland Kenney, *Recorded Music in American Life* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. xvii–xix.
- 11 'What began as writing ends as high fidelity and tape recording', Pierre Nora writes, adding that memory's 'new vocation is to record; delegating to the archive the responsibility of remembering, it sheds its signs upon depositing them there, as a snake sheds its skin'. Nora, 'Between memory and history', p. 13. David Lowenthal writes that, 'bereft of creative connection with the past, we zealously save its relics'. David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 364.
- 12 Sean O'Hagan, 'Who does Bob

fictional and powerfully symbolic American town that he dubs Smithville.⁶ In a similar way, Marcus states that 'the known and unknown basement tapes together make a town' – a town he names 'Kill Devil Hills'.⁷ The Basement Tapes and Smith's Folk Anthology suggest towns in part because of their sheer breadth: they are multi-album sets for which book metaphors such as album, anthology or songbook seem inappropriate. Furthermore, the town metaphor is fitting for Dylan's lyrics on the Basement Tapes, which are neither the 'finger-pointing' protest songs of his folk period nor the edgy, surreal 'chains of flashing images' of his mid-1960s electric material; neither are they Tin Pan Alley romances or the confessions of a singer-songwriter; the former perhaps best visualized as a diary or journal. Instead, the lyrics of the Basement Tapes depict an enigmatic cast of characters – Mrs Henry, Quinn the Eskimo, Tiny Montgomery – suggestive of a fictional town. Not only do both the Folk Anthology and the Basement Tapes suggest a kind of symbolic American community, they make clear how recorded sound can function as a site of collective memory.

By 'site of memory' I refer to Pierre Nora's notion of mnemonic artefacts in which 'memory crystallizes and secretes itself': artefacts that 'act as instrumental vehicles' for the collective memories underpinning social cohesion.⁸ Many scholars describe the products of the modern media as such sites. John Storey refers to the 'memory industries': that part of the cultural industries that produces representations through which 'we are invited to think, feel and recognize the past'.⁹ Discussions of media memory tend to focus on the cinema, but the phonograph is an equally significant 'memory industry', and records are eminently capable of stockpiling and circulating the sounds of the past, as well as activating memory in the present.¹⁰ Both Smith's Anthology and the Basement Tapes make the archival potential of recorded sound explicit: Smith collected relics of America's recorded past, and the Basement Tapes find Dylan and the Hawks tapping into the archive of American folk, country, rock and blues recordings. Both collections thus illustrate Nora's claim that modern memory is 'archival' and relies on 'the materiality of the trace, [and] the immediacy of the recording'.¹¹

Given the archival quality of its source material, it is fitting that Haynes intended the Billy the Kid sequence in *I'm Not There* to convey a sense of Dylan's memory. Haynes answered an interviewer's uneasiness with the sequence by saying, 'I thought it was important to have the sense of a man on the run in there, a man haunted by the ghosts of his previous selves'.¹² The casting of Gere as Billy was also shaped by notions of media and memory. Haynes has talked about wanting Gere for the part because of the way in which he 'carried with him a mini-history of American cinema'; he hoped the audience would recall Gere's previous film roles as they watched him animate Dylan. The theme of memory structures the Billy the Kid sequence and unites *I'm Not There*'s dual focus on Dylan's life and music. It is the section of the film in which Dylan encounters his past lives, and that visualizes Dylan's musical

Dylan think he is?’, *Observer Music Monthly*, no. 51 (2007), p. 49.

13 Robert B. Ray, *The ABCs of Classic Hollywood* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. xvii.

14 *Ibid.*, p. xxix.

15 Ray, *The Avant-Garde Finds Andy Hardy*, pp. 78–80.

16 The Budd Schulberg short story on which *A Face in the Crowd* was based, entitled ‘Your Arkansas traveler’, overlaps with a popular recording, a rube ‘laughing record’ similar to Cal Stewart’s. The ‘Arkansas traveler’ is a combination of song and dialogue whose origins date back to the 1840s. It is the story of ‘the interaction between urbane sophisticate and an uncouth squatter’. Archie Green, ‘The visual Arkansas traveler’, *JEMF Quarterly*, vol. 21, nos 75–76 (1985), p. 31.

exploration of the shared heritage of American sound recording. But the Billy sequence is haunted in more ways than one, and a chain of intertextual references or ghost texts links it to the earliest days of the record industry. Beneath the town in *I’m Not There* can be found another older town; older than Kill Devil Hills and Smithville, and connected to another collection of recordings even older and weirder than those found on Smith’s Folk Anthology.

In his call for alternative approaches to film studies, Robert B. Ray discusses methods based on a faith in concrete details to ‘animate theoretical speculation’.¹³ One of Ray’s preferred techniques – inspired by Salvador Dali’s ‘paranoiac critical activity’ – is the irrational expansion of a film scene in order to ‘squeeze’ the existing evidence: to look at a text closely until ‘it yields some precious information that has been hidden’.¹⁴ Such a method works from the assumption that everything in the frame is meaningful and so allows for the use of such things as anecdotes and ‘coincidental associations’.¹⁵ Following Ray’s emphasis on the riches that can be found from squeezing cinematic details until they yield hidden information, I will take a closer look at the name of the town in *I’m Not There*: Riddle. It should be noted that Riddle was the name given to the fictional town created by another singer of folk songs, Lonesome Rhodes (Andy Griffith) in Elia Kazan’s *A Face in the Crowd* (1957). Kazan’s film tells the story of a mysterious drifter who rises to fame on radio and television telling folksy anecdotes about the fictional town of Riddle, Arkansas. His stories about Riddle were ‘a kind of composite’, he explains in the film; a line echoed in *I’m Not There* by the ‘Woody’ incarnation of Dylan (Marcus Carl Franklin). These references to *A Face in the Crowd* thus function to amplify the idea of Dylan as an imposter: as the patron saint of the constructed and performed self. But this intertextual connection also leads to the disclosure of an even older layer to the town of Riddle. Lonesome Rhodes’s folksy stories about his family in Riddle are similar to Andy Griffith’s own comedy records, on which he played a naive, wide-eyed rube describing his encounters with opera, ballet, Shakespeare and football games. These records in turn index phonograph records made by one of the most popular recording artists of the late 1890s and 1900s, Cal Stewart.¹⁶ *I’m Not There* thus links Dylan’s recordings with Stewart’s via the town of Riddle, a connection that is almost certainly coincidental but nonetheless fortuitous because of the new light it can cast on the Basement Tapes, the film itself and media memory.

What we know of Cal Stewart’s life makes him sound a bit like a character we might encounter in Kill Devil Hills or Smithville. Born in the 1860s, Stewart’s early life was spent working for the railroad. After an accident in which he is said to have lost several fingers, Stewart began a varied career on the stage, including work as a blackface comedian, before he developed his Uncle Josh character and became the nation’s foremost Yankee caricaturist. Stewart made his first sound recordings in 1897, after which he quickly became established in the phonograph

17 These performances, as William Kenney writes, could demonstrate how and how not to behave in the modern city, and so function as a kind of 'cultural survival kit' for a rapidly urbanizing society. Kenney, *Recorded Music in American Life*, p. 33.

18 Raymond Williams argues that this contrast relies on a mystification of the country, and 'depends, often, on just the suppression of work in the countryside, and of the property relations through which this work is organized'. Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1973), pp. 46, 165.

19 Richard Terdiman, *Present Past* (Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press, 1993), p. 6. Terdiman describes the 'memory crisis' as the sense that the 'past had somehow evaded memory, that recollection had ceased to integrate with consciousness' (ibid., p. 4).

20 Modern means of transportation figure prominently on the Uncle Josh adventures. See, for example, 'Uncle Josh on a Bicycle', 'Uncle Josh on a Steamboat', 'Uncle Josh on an Automobile' and 'Uncle Josh on a Fifth Avenue Bus'.

industry and maintained a successful career there until his death in 1919. In his phonographic 'descriptive specialties', Stewart plays the role of a gullible Yankee rube named Uncle Josh Weathersby from the fictional town of Pumpkin Center. Patrick Feaster describes how the Yankee rube that Stewart embodies was one of many stock types pervasive in American popular culture of this period, and that the stage Yankee was known for 'garrulousness, verbal wit, and shrewdness in business dealings coupled with naïveté about city life and newfangled technology'.¹⁷ Indeed, Stewart's records often recount Uncle Josh's comical mishaps with aspects of modern life along the same lines as Griffith's records, as well as Edwin S. Porter's well-known Uncle Josh film, *Uncle Josh at the Moving Picture Show* (Edison, 1902): Uncle Josh mistakes a wax figure for a real person in a museum, is astounded by cooch dancers at Coney Island, and misunderstands the French waiters at Delmonico's where he is introduced to champagne ('I don't know what it was, but tasted like cider, and smelled like horseradish and made you act like a darn fool!').

Alongside these encounters with modernity in New York City, Stewart's records also feature descriptions of everyday life in Pumpkin Center: a rural, northeastern town populated by a cast of rustic characters. Stewart's Pumpkin Center stories illustrate what Raymond Williams calls a knowable community: 'a whole community, wholly knowable'. Williams argues that in literature such a community was often set in the past, in a country village that was held up as ideally conducive to 'direct relationships' and in contrast to the opacity of the city.¹⁸ Uncle Josh's Pumpkin Center records illustrate that literary conventions of the rural knowable community became an important expressive resource for the fledgling phonograph industry. Stewart's recordings map a spatial contrast between Pumpkin Center and New York City, as well as a tension between past and present, with Uncle Josh perpetually caught between these spaces and moments.

When placed in their turn-of-the-century context, the Uncle Josh records address what Richard Terdiman has called the 'memory crisis' of the modern era: listeners were given a lesson in how to navigate the 'newly disquieting lack of transparency' on a New York City bus or in a department store; at the same time, they were provided with a reassuring representation of a traditional society in which people carried 'their pasts and meanings openly', a past still tantalizingly knowable through the community of Pumpkin Center.¹⁹ In order to move between these modalities, Uncle Josh had to remain in transit between village and city, and between past and present. It is thus fitting that Uncle Josh's first appearance on the phonograph, recorded by Stewart as early as 1897, has the hapless Yankee arriving by train in New York City.²⁰

[Announcement]: Uncle Josh Weathersby's Arrival in New York City, made by Mr Cal Stewart, Edison Record. [Laughs] Well sir, I suppose I've had just about the awfulest time getting here to New York to see

you folks, allow you ever hear tell on. I was a-ridin' along on the *keers* a-comin' here, I had a ticket in my hat. Well, I put my head out the window to look at something, and wind blew the hat off and I lost the doggoned old ticket. [Laughs] Conductor, he made me buy another one, I had to buy two tickets to ride once, but I fooled him. He don't know a thing about it, and when he finds it out, he'll be just about the maddest conductor on the Pennsylvania railroad. [Laughs] I got a round-trip ticket and I ain't a-goin back!

As this phonographic debut indicates, the Uncle Josh records are keyed at exactly the spot where past and present, modern and traditional, and rural and urban intersect; and Stewart's performances function to define these distinctions through the voice of the Yankee rube. To sum up, Stewart's records were pioneering responses to a crisis in memory caused by the dislocations of modernity: responses that took the form of products of the emerging memory industry and, notably, that established the convention of the phonographic village – Pumpkin Center – as one of the sites within which the equivocations of that crisis found expression.

Though obviously different in genre and historical context, Dylan's Basement Tapes also resonate with issues of media memory and, in the eyes of influential critics and filmmakers, take the form of a kind of knowable community. Indeed, hearing the Uncle Josh records alongside the Basement Tapes reveals some surprising similarities between the two: both index, or originate from, rural northeastern America; both present a vivid cast of backwoods characters; and both combine traditional material with casual humour. In *Invisible Republic*, Marcus asks that we notice Dylan's disjointed comedic approach to the Basement Tape sessions, an approach that has much in common with a tradition of American 'Yankee humor'.²¹ Dylan's voice is 'Yankee Midwestern', Marcus writes, 'though it is also Appalachian, mountain-still'.²² Marcus makes these observations in the context of a reading of the Basement Tapes recording 'Lo and Behold!', a song that tells the story of a man pulling into town on a train; as Marcus puts it, the track 'opens on the rails . . . the singer with one foot on the platform and the other foot on the train as it pulls out within the basement walls'.²³ Dylan describes riding a train to San Antonio, when a coachman asks his name: 'I give it to him right away', he sings, 'then I hung my head in shame'. In the next verse, the singer finds a vacant seat and puts down his hat as the train comes into Pittsburgh. 'What's the matter, Molly, dear? What's the matter with your mound?', he asks. 'What's it to ya, Moby Dick? This is chicken town!', is the answer.²⁴

There is an intriguing correspondence between 'Lo and Behold!' and 'Uncle Josh's Arrival in New York City'. Dylan's thin, reedy voice, deadpan delivery, and even the business with the train conductor and hat suggest a shared lineage of 'Yankee humor' that includes both Dylan and Stewart. When Haynes translated Dylan's Basement Tapes to the screen,

²¹ Marcus, *Invisible Republic*, p. 48.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 51.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

²⁴ Bob Dylan, 'Lo and Behold!'.
© 1967; renewed 1995 Dwarf
Music.

he crystallized some of the recurring themes of that lineage, most notably the symbolic landscape of Pumpkin Center.

There are certainly family resemblances between Stewart's Uncle Josh records and the Billy the Kid sequence in *I'm Not There*. Like Uncle Josh, Billy is in transit and train travel is used as a framing device. In addition, Riddle is populated by characters with names like Chester, Homer Houndstooth and Rabbit Brown, and so depicts a vaguely premodern knowable community akin to Pumpkin Center. The temporal balancing act between past and present found on the Uncle Josh records returns here as well: a 1960s highway is being built through the apparently turn-of-the-century Riddle; in one scene, Billy squints into the distant hills and we see rapid cut-ins to images of the Vietnam War on television news. In such moments, the film offers a gentle critique of the Basement Tapes as Dylan's 'retreat' from public life, but in the process visualizes the jagged coexistence of past and present that was also the underlying theme of the Uncle Josh records.

We might also consider the centrepiece of the Billy the Kid sequence, which finds the citizens of Riddle gathered around the town bandstand, where they hear the Basement Tapes track 'Goin' To Acapulco' performed by members of Calexico and My Morning Jacket. This image of the traditional community convened around Dylan's track might be compared to a similar moment on one of Stewart's later recordings. On 'Uncle Josh buys a Victrola' (Victor, 1919), our Yankee protagonist brings a new phonograph player to Pumpkin Center and 'in less than no time' the entire town gathers in his house to listen to it. Uncle Josh plays religious records for Deacon Witherspoon, opera for Hank Weaver, 'Silver Threads Among the Gold' has 'the womenfolk pretty nigh crying', and later they play jazz records over the telephone to neighbouring Hickory Corners. At one point, Uncle Josh plays a rather strange record to the assembled villagers:

Well sir, there was one record what told about our town of Pumpkin Center. It told about Jim Lawson and me and Nancy, Deacon Witherspoon, Si Pettengil and Hank Weaver, Rube Hendricks, Lige Willet and about everyone in Pumpkin Center. First one would laugh and then the other, it all depended who the joke was on. [Laughs] Cindy Lawson got madder than a wet hen when it told about her. She said, 'Whoever did the talking on that record was hard-put for something to do'. Gosh, I never laughed more in my life at one time. [Laughs]

This depiction of Pumpkin Center convened around the phonograph, listening to records about themselves, is a striking moment of media reflexivity as well as an early instance of product placement, but it is also emblematic of the modern media's emergence as a central force in the forging of collective memory and identity. The knowable community of Pumpkin Center that served as a reassuring embodiment of the past consumes itself in the form of a product of the 'memory industries'.

²⁵ Carol Vernallis, 'Music video, songs, sound: experience, technique and emotion in *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*', *Screen*, vol. 49, no. 3 (2008), pp. 277–97.

²⁶ André Gaudreault, 'The diversity of cinematographic connections in the intermedial context of the turn of the 20th century', in Simon Popple and Vanessa Toulmin (eds), *Visual Delights: Essays on the Popular and Projected Image in the 19th Century* (Wiltshire: Flicks Books, 2000), p. 12.

²⁷ See Derek Kompare, 'Publishing flow: DVD box sets and the reconception of television', *Television and New Media*, no. 7 (2006), pp. 335–60. On repetition and home viewing, see Barbara Klinger, *Beyond the Multiplex* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2007).

Almost one hundred years later, when our sense of the past has become so strongly moored to an ever-proliferating media archive, *I'm Not There* – which is itself an investigation of the materiality of that archive – visualizes the town of Riddle gathered around the performance of one of Dylan's records.

What becomes clear is that Riddle, Kill Devil Hills, Smithville and Pumpkin Center are all company towns: *record company* towns. The Billy the Kid sequence might have puzzled many audiences because it not only depicts Dylan's lives and his music but, perhaps more than that, it depicts his *records*: the ways in which sound recordings are perceived; how they have changed our relationship to the past and our sense of community in the present; and how the archive of recorded sound can become a resource for cultural and artistic creativity. That the Riddle sequence is intimately linked to the history and experience of recorded sound can be suggested by one final meaningful image. In the assorted items on display at an estate sale in Riddle, we see the horn of a phonograph.

This is the hidden information yielded by Ray's method of squeezing cinematic detail: an unexpected alternative history of media memory beneath the surface of Haynes's film. The insights gleaned from Ray's method also have implications for current issues of the visualization of music and media reception. As a film about records, *I'm Not There* is comparable to, but distinct from, the work of directors such as Michel Gondry, David Fincher and Spike Jonze, who share what Carol Vernallis calls an 'intensified audiovisual aesthetics' that owes much to the form and experience of music video.²⁵ The chain of associations that connect *I'm Not There* to the earliest years of the recording industry indicate a host of 'intermedial links' between cinema and the record industry; links that go beyond the aesthetics of music video.²⁶ Now is an opportune time to investigate those links: in an era when television shows are increasingly experienced as DVD box sets, and films are watched and rewatched on home theatres, the spinning discs of the record industry begin to look more and more like blueprints for emerging modes of media reception.²⁷ As a poetic inquiry into the relationships between cinema, records and popular memory, *I'm Not There* has made an important contribution to that investigation.

Film Festival Workshop, St Andrew's University, Scotland, 4 April 2009

DOROTA OSTROWSKA

We all gathered early on this Saturday morning in the dark auditorium of the Byre Theatre in Abbey Street, St Andrew's. A small town with an ancient university, surrounded by golf courses stretching alongside sandy beaches with imposing sea views, St Andrew's attracts a steady stream of visitors (not unlike another small town in the South of France, the home of the festival of all festivals, Cannes). The impression of St Andrew's as a festival town was amplified by its proximity to Edinburgh, whose film festival in the 1970s became a site of well-known critical interventions in film and academic culture with its series of seminars and retrospectives curated by Lynda Myles. Edinburgh *festivaliers* were treated to a steady diet of psychoanalysis, Bertold Brecht, Frank Taschlin and Douglas Sirk. Although one would be hard-pressed to find even the most ambitious film festival today doing what Edinburgh used to do so well, Scotland still seems an appropriate place for thinking about film festival culture.

This Film Festival Workshop was organized by Dina Iordanova and forms part of her larger research project on the Dynamics of Global Cinema.¹ The workshop brought together an impressive mix of academics working on film festivals (from Britain, Germany, the Netherlands and Australia) with a group of practitioners, festival directors and journalists. Among the academics were Lucy Mazdon (working on the history of Cannes Film Festival), Janet Harbord (looking at festivals as events and the relationship of these events to time and technology), the scholars Skadi Loist and Marijke de Valck (both involved in a network which works on film festivals), Lindiwe Dovey (working on African filmmakers in the context of film festivals), Nuria Triana Toribio (exploring how aesthetics

¹ < <http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/worldcinema/> > [accessed 13 May 2009].

- 2 Thomas Elsaesser, 'Film festival networks: the new topographies of cinema in Europe' in *European Cinema: Face to Face with Hollywood* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2005), pp. 82–107.
- 3 Marijke de Valck, *Film Festivals: From European Geopolitics to Global Cinephilia* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2007).
- 4 *Film International*, no. 34 (2008).
- 5 Marijke de Valck and Skadi Loist have compiled the largest annotated bibliography of the writings on film festivals, at <http://www1.uni-hamburg.de/Medien/berichte/arbeiten/0091_08.html> [accessed 13 May 2009].
- 6 Dina Iordanova with Ragan Rhyne (eds), *Film Festival Yearbook 1: The Festival Circuit* (London: Wallflower Press, 2009); Richard Porton (ed.), *Dekalog 3: On Film Festivals* (London: Wallflower Press, 2009).

of cinema are shaped by the international film festivals), Stuart Cunningham (interested in digital distribution and festivals), David Slocum (working on African film festivals) and Ruby Cheung (specializing in Asian film festivals). The industry was represented by Irene Bignardi, a former director of the Locarno Film Festival, Michael Gubbins, previously chief editor of *Screen International*, Nick Roddick from *Sight and Sound* and *Cineaste*'s Richard Porton.

The event was intriguing in that it promised to offer a real focus to recent debate on film festivals. Thomas Elsaesser's seminal essay on film festivals was published in 2005;² then in 2007 came the most comprehensive and ambitious piece of work on the sociology of film festivals thus far, de Valck's *Film Festivals: From European Geopolitics to Global Cinephilia* (reviewed in this issue of *Screen*).³ A year later a special issue of *Film International*, edited by Iordanova and devoted to film festivals, was the first attempt to present an overview of the scholarship on this topic.⁴ These academic interventions were important because they offered a new critical inflection to existing writing on film festivals, which consisted of a long list of books on the history of particular film festivals, aimed at the general public and often journalistic in style.⁵ As the discussions at the workshop were to emerge from the work the participants were doing for the books *Film Festival Yearbook 1: The Festival Circuit* and *Dekalog 3: On Film Festivals*, there was a sense that a study of film festivals might be gathering a real momentum.⁶

The day began with an overview of existing film festival scholarship and methodologies, tending to focus on case studies through which workshop participants pointed out the conceptual potential of meta-analysis derived from such diverse disciplines as political economy, management and business theories, creative industries, sociology, city planning and tourism, labour studies, anthropology, cultural diplomacy and international relations. This marked the interdisciplinary potential of paying scholarly attention to film festival studies and was also a call to develop new conceptual frameworks for this field of study. As the day progressed, a number of conceptual approaches to the study of film festivals were suggested: they were seen as events which could be studied by drawing on the work of anthropologists and performance studies scholars; actor-network theory (ANT) was proposed as another possible paradigm; and questions of temporality, intensity, liveliness, excess and spectacle were also debated as a generative framework.

The workshop participants who were practitioners supported the idea of setting up some kind of taxonomy of film festivals and creating a more systematic way of studying them. Generally, and not surprisingly, their concerns were more immediate and practical than those of the academics. They advocated a closer look at the building blocks of film festivals (in particular major international film festivals) such as public funding, private sponsorship, jury composition, programming and curatorship, and the idea of festivals as 'publishing houses' which put into circulation both new and classical works. An important issue

shaping the day's debate was how to define the most fruitful channels of communication between the two communities, whose agendas and interests are quite different. It became apparent during the day that these two constituencies could benefit from each other's expertise. Academia could benefit from making contacts within the film industry who may help them break through the wall of silence and secrecy surrounding some of the major film festivals, in particular to gain some insight into the festivals' interaction. Both constituencies might be able to work together on mapping the role which film festivals play in creating networks of distribution and exhibition, and also in developing new film projects through scriptwriting labs, like the one in Sundance, or funding opportunities, such as that available through the Hubert Bals Fund at the Rotterdam Film Festival. Such collaborations might give some new meaning to the idea of 'knowledge transfer' in humanities and, more importantly, help us better understand the ways in which film festivals mould the world of film production, exhibition and distribution.

A slightly troubling feature of the workshop was the absence of history as one of the disciplines which could help shed some light on the phenomenon of film festivals. One could perhaps explain this absence by the workshop's ambition to chart a new area of study, one that might be seen as a call for a more panoramic view of film festivals. This rather crude distinction (between historical case studies and mapping a new field in an expansive way) illustrates the tension present at the workshop between the ambition to move into a new territory of research and the pressure to anchor it in the existing debates and historical developments. If film festival studies are going to take off, this cannot happen without history having some place in it. Firstly, one cannot fully comprehend the phenomenon of film festivals without taking into account histories of individual film festivals and historical interactions between the various events. Secondly, cultivating the historical dimension in the study of film festivals may be a way of establishing some connection to the field of film studies, which has been preoccupied with the history of cinema in a very particular way for the last two decades.⁷

The interface of film festival scholarship with the discipline of film studies would require an exploration of where the former sits in relation to the latter, both as a historical phenomenon and an aesthetic object. So, although the study of film festivals has the potential to infuse the notion of 'interdisciplinary' with some real substance and meaning, it has not as yet carved out a place for itself in relation to its intellectual forebears, most of whom work within film studies rather than sociology or international relations. The study of film festivals has the potential to become a strong theme within film and media studies in the future. Reaching out to practitioners was a real achievement of the workshop organizers, as was bringing a multidisciplinary team into conversation in this way. The only word of caution for enthusiasts for the study of film festivals is not to take *film* out of the equation as they move towards a new frontier in the study of audiovisual media.

⁷ This historical 'deepening' in film studies was accompanied by 'widening', which meant growing interest in world cinema. The participants and organizers of the film festival workshop have been important in orchestrating this widening in recent years.

Marijke De Valck, *Film Festivals: from European Geopolitics to Global Cinephilia*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2007, 276pp.

JULIAN STRINGER

Film Festivals: from European Geopolitics to Global Cinephilia is a pioneering as well as a timely book. Numerous critical and journalistic studies of film festivals have previously been published between hard or soft covers.¹ However, Marijke De Valck's contribution is the first English-language academic monograph on the topic. Its arrival also coincides with the recent appearance of other significant new research, including a dedicated issue of *Film International* and the first annual volume in the *Film Festival Yearbook* series.² Clearly, there is currently 'ferment in the field' of Film Festival Studies.³

Given a relative lack of critical models, De Valck is first of all to be congratulated for providing a sorely needed theoretical overview of the film festival phenomenon. The single most valuable accomplishment of *Film Festivals* is, therefore, that it offers a glimpse of how this complex subject may be tackled through an appropriately ambitious methodology. Multidimensional phenomena require a multilayered approach, and any extended discussion of festivals therefore needs to touch as a matter of course upon aspects of political economy, production, distribution, exhibition, aesthetics and politics. All of these intricate and interrelated areas are discussed by De Valck, albeit at varying levels of sophistication and with slightly uneven results.

In tackling the fundamental question of how best to approach her subject, De Valck opts for case studies of four specific European festivals – Berlin, Cannes, Venice and Rotterdam – each of which forms the basis of an individual chapter. This system for organizing the book's contents serves two functions: it marks key historical moments in the development of the international festival circuit from the 1930s to the present day, and it illustrates the book's core argument that festivals are historically a European phenomenon that then went global.

This comparative approach displays both conceptual strengths and weaknesses. Certainly, De Valck's mapping of a historical narrative concerning the rise of the festival circuit is important to any understanding of international film history. Particularly useful in this regard is the light she shines on a range of topics hitherto all but neglected within film studies. These include discussions of the 'historical self-sustainability of film festivals' (p. 36); the cultural politics of festival programming and the development of 'parallel festivals' such as Berlin's *Das Internationales Forum des Jungen Films* (p. 66); the role played by key individuals such as programmers and festival directors; the development of festival networks; festivals as 'sites of passage' (p. 36) through which value is added; and a concomitant focus on the spatial and temporal dimensions of specific events. Such contributions are original, if not completely unique. For example, De Valck's discussion of spatial

1 An early example is Kees Scherer, *Film Festival* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1962), an overview of the Cannes event by the Dutch photojournalist with written contributions by Bob Bertina, Jan Blokker, Paul De Casparis and H.J. Oolbekkink. An insightful (and enjoyable) contemporary example is Kieron Corless and Chris Darke, *Cannes: Inside the World's Premier Film Festival* (London: Faber and Faber, 2007).

2 *Film International*, vol. 6, no. 4 (October 2008), special issue on festivals, guest edited by Dina Iordanova; Dina Iordanova with Ragan Rhyne (eds), *Film Festival Yearbook 1: The Festival Circuit* (St Andrew's: St Andrew's Film Studies, 2009). For a useful annotated overview of the field to date, see Marijke De Valck and Skadi Loist, 'Film Festival Studies: an overview of a burgeoning field', in Iordanova with Rhyne (eds), *Film Festival Yearbook 1*, pp. 179–215, <http://www1.uni-hamburg.de/Medien/berichte/arbeiten/0091_08.html> [accessed 12 December 2009]. De Valck and Loist are cofounders of the Film Festival Research Network, an international organisation for scholarly exchange.

3 Unfortunately, the study of the important topic of television festivals is conspicuously absent from this emerging literature.

segregation and accreditation supplies a fresh and provocative way of exploring the politics of festivals as they are experienced by many constituents on the ground (pp. 141–6).

In contrast, the downside of the book's organization is that by splitting her attention four ways De Valck can treat individual case studies in a somewhat cursory fashion only. (This is compounded by an occasional lack of empirical justification for some of the more theoretical statements made in the earlier sections.) Indeed, while each of the first three chapters yields important insights, only the last – on the Rotterdam International Film Festival – may be said to constitute a finely achieved primary analysis. Perhaps benefiting from her own personal proximity to the Dutch event, De Valck here plants her feet on *terra firma* to provide a clear-sighted analysis of Rotterdam's distinct contribution, especially in terms of its role as a film producer.⁴

Other aspects of the book raise cause for concern. These include the decision to research festivals based on the questionable criteria of how 'successful' they are – a shifting and imprecise notion that is never satisfactorily clarified. Similarly, some of the statements De Valck makes regarding Hollywood – presented throughout as the Other of the international film festival circuit – are simplistic and reductive: 'Whereas Hollywood can straightforwardly pursue one clear agenda (maximized economic profits), film festivals are held back by the necessity to give and take between various agendas' (p. 207); 'the international film festival circuit functions as an "alternative" model that operates independent of commercial objectives' (pp. 104–5). Finally, given the book's subtitle it is also worth mentioning that notions of globalization might have been more finely nuanced. De Valck asserts that 'the most crucial characteristics of contemporary cinephilia are its truly global nature and reach' (p. 184), but little evidence is supplied to support such a statement. In practice, films discussed in detail, such as *The Return/Vosvracheni* (Andrey Zvyagintsev, Russia, 2003), appear to travel throughout Europe, to the USA, and to other countries such as Iran. Yet this hardly means that they reach 'all four corners of the world'.

Given the obvious significance of *Film Festivals*, it would be disingenuous not to also draw attention to the poor copyediting and proofreading that unfortunately blight so many of its pages. If ever an academic monograph cried out for attention from the proverbial 'fine-tooth comb' then this is it. Aside from a persistent repetition of key arguments and phrases, the number of spelling and other presentational errors is regrettably high.⁵ Such lack of attention to detail is compounded by an unfortunate rhetorical imprecision which at times closes down potentially fruitful avenues of approach. De Valck thus appears to suggest that the 'tension between specialized programming and the need to attract a mass audience' is 'not relevant' to the 'major "A" festival events' (p. 42), and she finds it 'helpful to ignore the theories that focus on national cinemas' when considering what she terms 'embedded festivals' (p. 68). This is a shame; many students from diverse disciplines

4 De Valck is Lecturer in Media Studies at the University of Amsterdam.

5 To give just one example, Robert Lort is called 'Robert Low' on p. 28 and both 'Robert Lort' and 'Robert Long' in the same sentence in the corresponding citation on p. 219. He is then called both 'Lort' and 'Low' under separate entries in the Index of Names and both 'Lort' and 'Long' in the Bibliography.

will wish to turn to De Valck's book for guidance, yet when they do they are going to find that such oversights have been preserved for posterity.

Let us end on a more positive note, though. *Film Festivals* is an important intervention that is well worth reading. It contains many useful insights while raising as many questions as it answers. Its publication will help supply an energy boost to scholars working in an exciting area of endeavour of huge potential importance to screen studies.

doi:10.1093/screen/hjp053

Hilary Radner, Alistair Fox and Irène Bessière (eds), *Jane Campion: Cinema, Nation, Identity* (Contemporary Approaches to Film and Television Series). Detroit, IL: Wayne State University Press, 2009, 329 pp.

Deb Verhoeven, *Jane Campion* (Routledge Film Guidebooks). London and New York, NY: Routledge, 2009, 273 pp.

FINCINA HOPGOOD

The field of 'Campion studies', as it has become known,¹ has been reinvigorated by the release of Jane Campion's first feature film in six years, *Bright Star* (2009), and the timely publication of two new books: Deb Verhoeven's monograph, simply titled *Jane Campion*, and the edited collection, *Jane Campion: Cinema, Nation, Identity*. Together these books offer a detailed and thorough examination of not only Campion's films but her persona as an auteur, as a woman director and as an 'antipodean' filmmaker. As such they constitute an important intervention in current theorizing about the contemporary auteur (or the 'post-auteur'), as well as a substantial contribution to our understanding of Campion's cinema.

Jane Campion is a figure that looms large in writings on feminist film theory and histories of Australian and New Zealand cinema. Despite a self-imposed hiatus from feature film production following the release of *In the Cut* (2003), Campion's importance as a filmmaker and the legacy of her most famous film, *The Piano* (1993), continued to be felt – in academic circles at least – through the publication of key works by Kathleen McHugh, Gail Jones and Barbara Klinger,² and the 2006 international research colloquium co-hosted by the University of Otago and the Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, which produced the collection of new essays reviewed here. Edited by the colloquium's organizers, Hilary Radner and Irène Bessière, together with Alistair Fox, *Jane Campion: Cinema, Nation, Identity* revisits and builds upon previous Campion scholarship, such as the seminal study by Dana Polan, earlier anthologies and interviews, and the poetic and deeply personal work of Sue Gillett,³ who contributes a new essay to this collection.

One of the collection's significant insights is the influence of New Zealand's and Australia's history and culture upon Campion as a filmmaker, and the various ways in which all her films – including those

1 Ann Hardy, 'Jane Campion and the moral occult', in Hilary Radner, Alistair Fox and Irène Bessière (eds), *Jane Campion: Cinema, Nation, Identity* (Detroit, IL: Wayne State University Press, 2009), p. 256.

2 Kathleen McHugh, *Jane Campion* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2007); Gail Jones, *The Piano* (Sydney: Currency Press, 2007); Barbara Klinger, 'The art film, affect and the female viewer: *The Piano* revisited', *Screen*, vol. 47, no. 1 (2006), pp. 19–42.

3 Dana Polan, *Jane Campion* (London: British Film Institute, 2001); Harriet Margolis (ed.), *Jane Campion's The Piano* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Felicity Coombs and Suzanne Gemmell, *Piano Lessons: Approaches to The Piano* (Sydney: John Libbey, 2000); Virginia Wright Wexman (ed.), *Jane Campion: Interviews* (Jackson, MI: University Press of Mississippi, 1999); Sue Gillett, *Views from Beyond the Mirror: the Films of Jane Campion* (St Kilda: Australian Teachers of Media, 2004).

will wish to turn to De Valck's book for guidance, yet when they do they are going to find that such oversights have been preserved for posterity.

Let us end on a more positive note, though. *Film Festivals* is an important intervention that is well worth reading. It contains many useful insights while raising as many questions as it answers. Its publication will help supply an energy boost to scholars working in an exciting area of endeavour of huge potential importance to screen studies.

doi:10.1093/screen/hjp053

Hilary Radner, Alistair Fox and Irène Bessière (eds), *Jane Campion: Cinema, Nation, Identity* (Contemporary Approaches to Film and Television Series). Detroit, IL: Wayne State University Press, 2009, 329 pp.

Deb Verhoeven, *Jane Campion* (Routledge Film Guidebooks). London and New York, NY: Routledge, 2009, 273 pp.

FINCINA HOPGOOD

The field of 'Campion studies', as it has become known,¹ has been reinvigorated by the release of Jane Campion's first feature film in six years, *Bright Star* (2009), and the timely publication of two new books: Deb Verhoeven's monograph, simply titled *Jane Campion*, and the edited collection, *Jane Campion: Cinema, Nation, Identity*. Together these books offer a detailed and thorough examination of not only Campion's films but her persona as an auteur, as a woman director and as an 'antipodean' filmmaker. As such they constitute an important intervention in current theorizing about the contemporary auteur (or the 'post-auteur'), as well as a substantial contribution to our understanding of Campion's cinema.

Jane Campion is a figure that looms large in writings on feminist film theory and histories of Australian and New Zealand cinema. Despite a self-imposed hiatus from feature film production following the release of *In the Cut* (2003), Campion's importance as a filmmaker and the legacy of her most famous film, *The Piano* (1993), continued to be felt – in academic circles at least – through the publication of key works by Kathleen McHugh, Gail Jones and Barbara Klinger,² and the 2006 international research colloquium co-hosted by the University of Otago and the Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, which produced the collection of new essays reviewed here. Edited by the colloquium's organizers, Hilary Radner and Irène Bessière, together with Alistair Fox, *Jane Campion: Cinema, Nation, Identity* revisits and builds upon previous Campion scholarship, such as the seminal study by Dana Polan, earlier anthologies and interviews, and the poetic and deeply personal work of Sue Gillett,³ who contributes a new essay to this collection.

One of the collection's significant insights is the influence of New Zealand's and Australia's history and culture upon Campion as a filmmaker, and the various ways in which all her films – including those

1 Ann Hardy, 'Jane Campion and the moral occult', in Hilary Radner, Alistair Fox and Irène Bessière (eds), *Jane Campion: Cinema, Nation, Identity* (Detroit, IL: Wayne State University Press, 2009), p. 256.

2 Kathleen McHugh, *Jane Campion* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2007); Gail Jones, *The Piano* (Sydney: Currency Press, 2007); Barbara Klinger, 'The art film, affect and the female viewer: *The Piano* revisited', *Screen*, vol. 47, no. 1 (2006), pp. 19–42.

3 Dana Polan, *Jane Campion* (London: British Film Institute, 2001); Harriet Margolis (ed.), *Jane Campion's The Piano* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Felicity Coombs and Suzanne Gemmell, *Piano Lessons: Approaches to The Piano* (Sydney: John Libbey, 2000); Virginia Wright Wexman (ed.), *Jane Campion: Interviews* (Jackson, MI: University Press of Mississippi, 1999); Sue Gillett, *Views from Beyond the Mirror: the Films of Jane Campion* (St Kilda: Australian Teachers of Media, 2004).

set elsewhere, namely *The Portrait of a Lady* (1996) and *In the Cut* – are informed by this ‘antipodean’ identity. In the context of the competing claims over Campion’s nationality as a filmmaker – born and raised in New Zealand but trained and now living in Australia – this term ‘antipodean’ provides a useful launch-pad for the various contributors to explore the influence of Campion’s origins upon her cinema, without the burden of semantics. The term also allows for an exploration of European – specifically French – attitudes towards artists from the southern hemisphere, which results in a fascinating analysis, across the entire collection, of Campion’s media persona as ‘an antipodean filmmaker in an international context’ (p. xi).

The collection is usefully organized into four parts, each comprising three or four essays, which gives a sense of the colloquium’s major discussion points and emergent themes. Part One, ‘Subjectivities and the Construction of Identity in Jane Campion’s Films’, gives scope for a reconsideration and consolidation of Campion scholarship and the woman’s film by Hilary Radner – an excellent choice with which to open the collection – alongside smaller-scale studies of Campion’s collaborations with Harvey Keitel (by Chris Holmlund); of her relationships with her mother and sister, as depicted in Anna Campion’s short film *The Audition* (1990) (by Harriet Margolis); and of the poetics of Campion’s cinema (by Muriel Andrin). Parts Two and Three examine Campion’s literary sources and her ‘geographies’, respectively, while Part Four, ‘Viewers Respond to Jane Campion’, accommodates a diversity of approaches, from Simon Sigley’s study of the French reception of Campion to Sue Gillett’s psychoanalysis of her response to *The Piano*, this time revisiting the film from Flora’s (Anna Paquin) perspective.⁴ With fifteen contributors, from New Zealand, Australia, France, Belgium and the USA, across a range of disciplines (English, French, literature, film, art and gender studies), this collection is testimony to the rich terrain of theoretical, historical, social and aesthetic issues unearthed by Campion’s cinema.

A particular pleasure in *Jane Campion: Cinema, Nation, Identity* is the rehabilitation of Campion’s ill-fated adaptation of Henry James’s *The Portrait of a Lady*. Several contributors revisit this film, which stands out in the Campion canon as her most expensive film and her greatest critical and commercial failure.⁵ In her analysis of *Portrait*’s depiction of the illusion and traps of romance, Irène Bessière draws productive links with *An Angel at My Table* (1990) and *The Piano* (I would also include *In the Cut*), thus establishing a thematic continuity in Campion’s cinema which belies the heterogeneity of genres in which she has worked (biopic, gothic romance, period or heritage film, screwball comedy, thriller). Similarly, Jean Bessière uses *Portrait* and *An Angel at My Table* – both literary adaptations scripted by Laura Jones – to elucidate the ‘international theme’ in Campion’s work of the naive American/Antipodean exploring the darker side of the European continent (pp. 157ff). Annabel Cooper’s essay, ‘On Viewing Jane Campion as

⁴ Gillett previously investigated her personal response to *The Piano* – in which she identified with Ada (Holly Hunter) – in her haunting essay ‘Lips and fingers: Jane Campion’s *The Piano*’, *Screen*, vol. 36, no. 3 (1995), pp. 277–87.

⁵ Kathleen A. McHugh, ‘Jane Campion: adaptation, signature, autobiography’, in Radner, Fox and Bessière (eds), *Jane Campion*, p. 142. See Polan, *Jane Campion*, p. 5, for box-office figures, and pp. 14, 16, 25, for the negative critical reception of *Portrait*.

Antipodean', adds to this reconsideration of *Portrait* by comparing Campion's film with Gillian Armstrong's iconic feminist period film, *My Brilliant Career* (1979). Much has been made of Campion's decision to end her adaptation of James's novel with Isabel (Nicole Kidman) poised on the threshold, leaving it open to the viewer to decide whether she returns to her abusive husband, Osmond (John Malkovich) (in the novel, she does return). Cooper writes: 'Campion's *Portrait* differs from James's primarily in the openness of Isabel's future. Perhaps here too we can detect the trace of Sybylla' (p. 290), Armstrong's wilful protagonist who rejects marriage in favour of a writer's life.

The collection's central theme of the antipodean influence upon Campion's films is most thoroughly and convincingly explored by Alistair Fox, in his essay 'Puritanism and the erotics of transgression: the New Zealand influence in Jane Campion's thematic imaginary'. Fox revisits the controversy over *The Piano* and the similarities between its plot and Jane Mander's novel *The Story of a New Zealand River* (1920). In a delicate and complex balancing act that explores the notion of influence without going so far as to repeat previous claims of adaptation and plagiarism, Fox examines *The Piano* and its literary heritage as part of a broader argument about the influence of New Zealand puritanism on Campion's work. Fox begins by observing that 'there have been few (if any) attempts ... to account for how the distinctive social configuration and value system of New Zealand society – both in its colonial form and its postcolonial legacy – may have helped to determine the way Campion views the world that she constructs in her films' (p. 103). While he takes *The Piano* as his starting point and primary case study for this line of investigation, it is when Fox opens up the discussion to include Campion's other films – both preceding and following *The Piano* – that he presses his case for a thematic unity and coherence in Campion's work that is directly linked to the puritanical value system and social codes of New Zealand society (p. 118).

This search for thematic unity in a contemporary director's work is testimony to the ongoing influence of auteur theory, despite the significant critiques and revisions it has undergone over the past four decades. The robustness of the idea of 'the auteur' and its continued relevance to contemporary cinema – particularly European and art cinema – is evident in the recent development of a theory of post-auteurism, which seeks to account for the role of 'the auteur' in an industrial as well as an academic context.⁶ In Deb Verhoeven's book, Jane Campion is identified as exemplary of the contemporary post-auteur. As Verhoeven acknowledges, it was Dana Polan who first attended to the idea of Campion as a post-auteur, observing that 'Campion's career bears no unity of theme and style but is marked rather by shifts of direction and change of emphasis'.⁷ While Alistair Fox disputes Polan's claim (p. 118), Verhoeven regards the heterogeneity in Campion's cinema as symptomatic of the role of the contemporary auteur today: 'the likelihood is that the auteur will not be coherent, nor consistent, nor canonical in her

6 See, for example, Justin Wyatt, 'Economic constraints/economic opportunities: Robert Altman as auteur', *The Velvet Light Trap*, no. 38 (1996), pp. 51–67; Rosanna Maule, 'De-authorising the Auteur', in Cristina Degli-Eposti (ed.), *Postmodernism in the Cinema* (New York, NY: Berghahn Books, 1998), pp. 113–30; Dana Polan, 'Auteur desire', *Screening the Past*, no. 12 (2001). <<http://www.latrobe.edu.au/screeningthepast/firstrelease/fr0301/dpfr12a.htm>> [accessed 26 November 2009]. All are cited in Verhoeven's introductory chapter.

7 Polan, *Jane Campion*, p. 160.

every iteration' (p. 23). Verhoeven's concept of post-auteurism recognizes both the death of the classical discourses of authorship and the persistence of the idea of the auteur for contemporary film audiences, thereby acknowledging 'a pluralism of approaches to authorship. The practice of contemporary film production seems to allow the author to be many things in different industry contexts; an expressive individual, a social subject, a "name" established across a series of film texts and through their promotion to the public' (p. 23).

What is evident in this idea of the post-auteur is the role of the filmmaker in 'fashioning' herself (Verhoeven's term) as an auteur, through her media persona, her (often diverse) aesthetic choices and her promotion of her films. Verhoeven's research includes interviews and promotional materials held in various archives in Australia and New Zealand, in addition to the interviews collected in Virginia Wright Wexman's indispensable anthology. Read through the lens of post-auteurism, these various statements by Campion both complement and complicate the assumptions made and conclusions drawn by media and academia alike. Indicative of the depth of her analysis, Verhoeven dedicates separate chapters to Campion's relationship with the media, with the film industry and with academia (specifically the fields of feminist and film studies). It is this third chapter that proves especially illuminating when read alongside Radner, Fox and Bessière's collection.

Verhoeven observes that

there is much in Campion's work that is intrinsically appealing to academics and that almost all of her films have been able to cultivate and address a global 'expert' audience. And in so enthusiastically embracing her, this audience has in turn, assisted in establishing Campion as an international filmmaker, a 'deterritorialized' figure articulating the sort of universal 'issues' and principles many academics also claim to address. (pp. 147–8)

The contributors to *Jane Campion: Cinema, Nation, Identity* represent a sample of this 'global "expert" audience' identified by Verhoeven. Her figure of 'the academic as fan' is exemplified by Sue Gillett, whose earlier writings on Campion are discussed by Verhoeven. Gillett's contribution here continues her brave, audacious merging of the personal with the theoretical. Her essay, "The piano is mine. It's *mine*." My (free association with) Jane Campion, or, the child in the spectator', documents and explores the affective dimensions inherent in a group of academics who are brought together by a shared interest in (or shared love of) a director's films.

There are other resonances across the two books. Like Verhoeven, Raphaëlle Moine sees Campion's career as representative of cinema in the late twentieth century. She fruitfully explores the heterogeneity of Campion's cinema through the metaphor of a specialized *épicerie*, 'a small shop on which the owner imposes her style by selecting the products that she displays and sells' (p. 189): 'just as in a delicatessen's shop products

8 Campion's early short films – *Peel: an Exercise in Discipline* (1983), *Passionless Moments* (1984) and *A Girl's Own Story* (1984) – were screened at the Cannes Film Festival in 1986, with *Peel* winning the Palme d'Or for best short film. During her 'break' from filmmaking between *In the Cut* and *Bright Star*, Campion contributed short films to two collective projects: one commissioned by the United Nations to promote the UN Millennium Goals (*The Water Diary* [2005], which narrates the impact of drought), the other commissioned by the Cannes Film Festival to celebrate its 60th anniversary (*The Lady Bug* [2007], which dramatizes debates about gender and cinema).

originating in different countries are presented together in the same place, on the same shelves, the films of Campion offer a complex exoticism, given that the representations they articulate contain elements that are culturally heterogeneous' (pp. 189-90). Kathleen A. McHugh and Annabel Cooper both focus on Campion's media persona, McHugh exploring 'Jane Campion' as a brand name or 'signature' (pp. 142, 151) while Cooper examines Campion's fashioning of her public persona through interviews as 'antipodean feminine' (p. 279). Like Verhoeven in her examination of Campion's academic reception, Simon Sigley analyzes French media reviews of Campion's films, thereby demonstrating the role of the press (in France, at least) in constituting the auteur and defining her thematics and aesthetics. It is astonishing the zeal with which Campion was embraced and championed by the French media in the early 1990s. In the media commentary on *An Angel at My Table* and *The Piano*, Campion becomes a muse for the journalists' own lyrical waxings about cinema and New Zealand. Sigley's essay is one of the strongest contributions to *Jane Campion: Cinema, Nation, Identity* in terms of depth of research, beauty of writing, and novelty of insight.

While *Jane Campion* is marketed as an introductory text for students, in the Routledge Film Guidebooks series, Verhoeven's book makes a significant contribution to film scholarship in its own right, offering detailed analyses not only of Campion's films but of the field of Campion studies and the developing theory of post-auteurism. Like *Jane Campion: Cinema, Nation, Identity*, this book highlights the importance of New Zealand and Australian culture and history to an understanding of Campion's cinema; it includes a chart that traces 'key events' in both countries and their respective film industries, alongside milestones in Campion's biography. The extensive filmography, with key credits, synopses and awards, includes Campion's shorts and telemovies as well as features. This is important given the significance of Campion's early short films in establishing her critical reputation, and her recent return to the form in between features.⁸ Both books include well-chosen frame stills and substantial bibliographies, while Verhoeven also provides, in her final chapter, a lengthy, wide-ranging interview with Campion that was conducted in August 2005, in which Campion reflects upon her creative process as a filmmaker and the critical factors that supported her career development.

Verhoeven is masterful in her command of the myriad discourses circulating around the sign 'Jane Campion'. While her book was in production prior to the release of *Bright Star*, Verhoeven offers this valuable insight:

The prescient, premature public reception of *Bright Star*, well before its release in cinemas, reminds us that Campion's visions are always already 'mediated'. In this circuitous context, the contemporary auteur makes her self available to academics in a way that also enables us to orient and conduct our selves in a world indelibly marked by media images and practices of mediation. (p. 178)

By illuminating the reciprocal relationships between Jane Campion, the media and the academy, Verhoeven offers more than an introduction to Campion's cinema. She takes the field of Campion studies in an exciting new direction, with a broader relevance for contemporary cinema and film theory.

doi:10.1093/screen/hjp047

Murray Pomerance (ed.), *A Family Affair: Cinema Calls Home*. London: Wallflower, 2008, 256 pp.

STELLA BRUZZI

Pomerance's edited anthology is a book about the family in largely, but not exclusively, recent Hollywood films. However, in neither its title nor in the first lines of its introduction is the focus on Hollywood made explicit, which is indicative of the book's pervasive attitude towards Hollywood's traits and values as somehow more universal than they are. This is a large anthology, so to make it more manageable the chapters are grouped under three subheadings: 'Family, Genre, Auteur'; 'Politics, Family, Society'; 'Troubles, Dreams, Family'. The last grouping is a bit of a ragbag of chapters that do not really fit elsewhere. Jerry Mosher's entertaining discussion of Burl Ives, size and patriarchal power is set alongside Nathan Holmes on screen teens and suburbia and Adrienne L. McLean on 1950s fan magazines' depictions of stars and their families, which means that Mosher's illuminating discussion of Ives's 'big daddy' persona is lost in a collection largely uninterested in the quirkier fringes of families on film. *A Family Affair*, though it undoubtedly contains some immensely worthwhile contributions, is too sprawling to be a curate's egg – which always suggests something rather more neatly flawed – and too inconsistent to be enduring. William Rothman's chapter on the family in Hitchcock is unfocused and odd (dwelling too long in a chapter purportedly about the family on the director's supposed fixation on Ingrid Bergman); and how Wheeler Winston Dixon can still be arguing that *It's A Wonderful Life* is 'a sentimental Christmas film' (p. 13) is beyond me. By contrast, there are contributions that are both entertaining and enlightening, such as Lucy Fischer's essay on *Imitation of Life* and *All I Desire*, an exemplary lesson in how to identify a narrative motif (the actress mother as a vehicle for examining the tensions between motherhood and work) and broaden it out into a satisfying argument about a filmmaker's style.

A Family Affair does not proffer an overall thesis on the family – understandable for an edited anthology – but neither does it possess an underpinning rationale or conceptualization of what 'the family' signifies. As a result, 'the family', as outlined in Pomerance's introduction, can mean almost anything from the actual social family to the family as narrative construct, from the surrogate, imaginary or

By illuminating the reciprocal relationships between Jane Campion, the media and the academy, Verhoeven offers more than an introduction to Campion's cinema. She takes the field of Campion studies in an exciting new direction, with a broader relevance for contemporary cinema and film theory.

doi:10.1093/screen/hjp047

Murray Pomerance (ed.), *A Family Affair: Cinema Calls Home*. London: Wallflower, 2008, 256 pp.

STELLA BRUZZI

Pomerance's edited anthology is a book about the family in largely, but not exclusively, recent Hollywood films. However, in neither its title nor in the first lines of its introduction is the focus on Hollywood made explicit, which is indicative of the book's pervasive attitude towards Hollywood's traits and values as somehow more universal than they are. This is a large anthology, so to make it more manageable the chapters are grouped under three subheadings: 'Family, Genre, Auteur'; 'Politics, Family, Society'; 'Troubles, Dreams, Family'. The last grouping is a bit of a ragbag of chapters that do not really fit elsewhere. Jerry Mosher's entertaining discussion of Burl Ives, size and patriarchal power is set alongside Nathan Holmes on screen teens and suburbia and Adrienne L. McLean on 1950s fan magazines' depictions of stars and their families, which means that Mosher's illuminating discussion of Ives's 'big daddy' persona is lost in a collection largely uninterested in the quirkier fringes of families on film. *A Family Affair*, though it undoubtedly contains some immensely worthwhile contributions, is too sprawling to be a curate's egg – which always suggests something rather more neatly flawed – and too inconsistent to be enduring. William Rothman's chapter on the family in Hitchcock is unfocused and odd (dwelling too long in a chapter purportedly about the family on the director's supposed fixation on Ingrid Bergman); and how Wheeler Winston Dixon can still be arguing that *It's A Wonderful Life* is 'a sentimental Christmas film' (p. 13) is beyond me. By contrast, there are contributions that are both entertaining and enlightening, such as Lucy Fischer's essay on *Imitation of Life* and *All I Desire*, an exemplary lesson in how to identify a narrative motif (the actress mother as a vehicle for examining the tensions between motherhood and work) and broaden it out into a satisfying argument about a filmmaker's style.

A Family Affair does not proffer an overall thesis on the family – understandable for an edited anthology – but neither does it possess an underpinning rationale or conceptualization of what 'the family' signifies. As a result, 'the family', as outlined in Pomerance's introduction, can mean almost anything from the actual social family to the family as narrative construct, from the surrogate, imaginary or

symbolic family to real Hollywood families, or Hollywood's family tree. *A Family Affair* defines the family unit as broadly as possible (perhaps because this is what Pomerance would like the collection to do) but this is at odds with the actual bias of the contributions, which are, with a few notable exceptions, focused almost entirely on the family as narrative construct.

For a book so bound up with the family as motif, the definitions offered of what constitutes a family are unnecessarily limited. In his introduction, Pomerance asserts that

since we are deeply committed to family life in the West, using it as a mode of education and warehousing, a mode of defence and strategising – indeed, a sanctity – we also seem prone to the belief that family is the natural state of humankind . . . the essential form. (p. 8)

In this sentence lurk many problems, not least that the editor's reluctance to probe the problematic conceptualization of the family as 'the natural state' or 'essential form' of humankind sets the tone for the ensuing book. Despite notable advances in cultural and political thinking about what families are and how the identity of the family might have changed with women's and gay liberation, for instance, it is disappointing that the family as a unit is not questioned or redefined more penetratingly and this leads to some dull and conservative discussions. Steven Alan Carr, writing on the family as media consumer in his essay 'How some things never change: Britney, the joy of Pepsi and the familial gaze', asks:

How is it, then, that as the number of traditional nuclear families within the US appears to be on the wane, regressive ideologies centred upon the concept of the nuclear family appear more resolute and more widespread than ever? (p. 136)

The answer to Carr's question lies in the question itself, namely that an attachment to the traditional family structure and its assumed 'values' is more likely to surface in fictional contexts precisely *because* the structures and values are deemed to be under threat; what needs to be looked at more urgently is why there might be a desire to see these structures and values reaffirmed. The tendency, shared by several of the contributors to *A Family Affair*, of viewing Hollywood and western society as monolithic institutions extremely reluctant to deviate from the twin paths of traditionalism and morality becomes stultifying. Although she swiftly and profitably leaves such generalities behind, Marcia Landy begins her essay on the family in Todd Haynes's films with the big – and virtually unprovable – statement: 'The family is a battleground for the hearts and minds of Americans, a disciplinary unit in the interests of social and political power' (p. 205). Likewise Pomerance, at the start of his own chapter 'The look of love: cinema and the dramaturgy of kinship', with which the collection concludes, cites Robin Wood's assertion that an 'obsessive emphasis on the family is a "component of

fascism building all over the world” (p. 293). Although entertaining, these statements about how terrible and terribly conservative families are do beg the question: why bother writing a book about them if they are beyond hope?

Of course the reason for writing a book about them is that they are not beyond hope, as various other contributors to the volume make clear. Several chapters, Landy’s among them, concern themselves with the necessary redefinition of heterosexist ‘family values’ through their challenge by homosexuality. Yvonne Tasker’s discussion of postfeminism, masculinity and male parenting is promising but ultimately disappointing, not least because of her concluding suggestion that ‘Unsurprisingly, little of this complexity appears within the Hollywood cinema’ (p. 186). Having just asked why we should bother to write about the family if it is deemed unchangeably traditional, this statement now makes me want to ask why we should bother to discuss *Mary Poppins*, *The Object of My Affection* or *The Next Best Thing* if there is so little of complexity within them? Contemporary Hollywood cinema is undoubtedly a popular subject matter for film scholarship, but it is a pity that many of the critics that peddle it have already shut the door on Hollywood’s subversive potential. There seems to be a compulsion amongst publishers to commission books about contemporary or recent Hollywood because this is what will sell, especially to students. However, these films do not necessarily make the most engrossing subjects, leading too often to rather banal and obvious discussion. There are exceptions to this, for example Robin Wood’s or Mandy Merck’s recent analyses of *American Pie*,¹ but both Wood and Merck are entertaining because they hold onto the belief that Hollywood films can be interesting and multifaceted.

Other chapters which negotiate homosexuality’s disruption of the traditional family are more successful, notably Harry M. Benshoff’s ‘Queers and families in film: from problems to parents’, which discusses *The Bird Cage*, *Brokeback Mountain* and *Far From Heaven*. This chapter mounts a convincing challenge to the otherwise widespread idea that both society and Hollywood are inherently conservative when it comes to their views on the family. Although Benshoff contends that, as a fundamentally heterosexist institution, Hollywood ‘has almost always told stories about gay men and lesbians within heterosexual perspectives, when it told them at all’ (p. 224), he is also willing to acknowledge that a film such as *Brokeback Mountain* breaks this mould and, like the western as a genre more widely, is able to ‘blur the boundaries between straight and gay, between homosocial and homosexual’ (p. 229). Benshoff’s conclusion – which sits in illuminating contradistinction to those of some of the other chapters – is that, in the twenty-first century, families ‘are becoming increasingly queer’ (p. 232).

What makes a collection such as this so intriguing yet frustrating is that there is little perceptible consistency in terms of how authors view ideological and social trends and their impact on Hollywood. One

¹ Robin Wood, ‘Party time, or can’t hardly wait for that American Pie: Hollywood high school movies of the 90s’, *CineAction!*, no. 58 (2002), pp. 4–10; Mandy Merck, ‘American Pie’, in Merck (ed.), *America First: Naming the Nation in US Film* (London: Routledge, 2007).

- 2 Elizabeth Traube, *Dreaming Identities: Class, Gender and Generation in 1980s Hollywood Movies* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1992); Sarah Harwood, *Family Fictions: Representations of the Family in 1980s Hollywood* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1997).

- 1 Patricia Ticineto Clough, 'Introduction', in Patricia Ticineto Clough and Jean Hailey (eds), *The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), p. 1.

- 2 See Laura U. Marks, *The Skin of Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment and the Senses* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000); Vivian Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts, Embodiment and Moving Image Culture* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2004).

consistency, however, is the choice of films. *A Family Affair* is very much of its time; some films recur throughout, whilst others that would be equally legitimate objects of enquiry remain sidelined. *A Family Affair* is largely uninterested in the more oddball family movies, many of which – *Magnolia*, *Happiness* or even *The Royal Tenenbaums*, which is shown on the cover – receive only a cursory mention. Others, such as *Brokeback Mountain* and *Far From Heaven* especially, are considered several times over. The impact of queer theory and politics has the same impact on *A Family Affair* as feminism had on earlier books about the family in Hollywood, such as those by Elizabeth Traube or Sarah Harwood.² But unlike these, *A Family Affair* does not demonstrate a genuine love of its films and subject matter. In his introduction, Pomerance refers to 'the conservative America of the 1950s and 1960s' (and how, we might well ask, are these two decades the same?) and how their culture is 'mirrored – and represented with unthinking faithfulness – by conservative Hollywood' (p. 2). *A Family Affair* is just one of many books to have almost forgotten that Hollywood – even its box-office hits and most successful auteurs – is entirely capable of being complex and subversive.

doi:10.1093/screen/hjp044

Kristyn Gorton, *Media Audiences: Television, Meaning and Emotion* (Media Topics Series). Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009, 179 pp.
Misha Kavka, *Reality Television, Affect and Intimacy: Reality Matters* (Language, Discourse, Society Series). Basingstoke and New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008, 191 pp.

ALEXIA SMIT

In what Patricia Clough has described as 'the affective turn'¹ questions of affect, embodiment and emotion have gained increasing currency in recent theory and criticism. Interest has been generated around a diverse range of theorists whose work is concerned less with what texts signify than with how they exert an affective impact on the readers and viewers who encounter them. With theories of affect well developed in film studies,² it is surprising that television, a medium long associated with intimacy and emotional excess, has so long been left on the sidelines of debates on affect in visual media. The books under review here present provocative attempts to develop theoretical work on emotion and affect for television studies.

This project comes with the vast challenges posed by television's diverse and unpredictable audiences. And yet for both Kristyn Gorton and Misha Kavka affect provides a new focus for extending their analyses offscreen to consider the hearts and bodies of the viewers involved in the television experience. The title of Gorton's book, *Media Audiences: Television, Meaning and Emotion*, boldly posits the centrality of emotion in understanding television audiences. The book is

- 2 Elizabeth Traube, *Dreaming Identities: Class, Gender and Generation in 1980s Hollywood Movies* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1992); Sarah Harwood, *Family Fictions: Representations of the Family in 1980s Hollywood* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1997).

- 1 Patricia Ticineto Clough, 'Introduction', in Patricia Ticineto Clough and Jean Hailey (eds), *The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), p. 1.

- 2 See Laura U. Marks, *The Skin of Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment and the Senses* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000); Vivian Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts, Embodiment and Moving Image Culture* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2004).

consistency, however, is the choice of films. *A Family Affair* is very much of its time; some films recur throughout, whilst others that would be equally legitimate objects of enquiry remain sidelined. *A Family Affair* is largely uninterested in the more oddball family movies, many of which – *Magnolia*, *Happiness* or even *The Royal Tenenbaums*, which is shown on the cover – receive only a cursory mention. Others, such as *Brokeback Mountain* and *Far From Heaven* especially, are considered several times over. The impact of queer theory and politics has the same impact on *A Family Affair* as feminism had on earlier books about the family in Hollywood, such as those by Elizabeth Traube or Sarah Harwood.² But unlike these, *A Family Affair* does not demonstrate a genuine love of its films and subject matter. In his introduction, Pomerance refers to 'the conservative America of the 1950s and 1960s' (and how, we might well ask, are these two decades the same?) and how their culture is 'mirrored – and represented with unthinking faithfulness – by conservative Hollywood' (p. 2). *A Family Affair* is just one of many books to have almost forgotten that Hollywood – even its box-office hits and most successful auteurs – is entirely capable of being complex and subversive.

doi:10.1093/screen/hjp044

Kristyn Gorton, *Media Audiences: Television, Meaning and Emotion* (Media Topics Series). Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009, 179 pp.
Misha Kavka, *Reality Television, Affect and Intimacy: Reality Matters* (Language, Discourse, Society Series). Basingstoke and New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008, 191 pp.

ALEXIA SMIT

In what Patricia Clough has described as 'the affective turn'¹ questions of affect, embodiment and emotion have gained increasing currency in recent theory and criticism. Interest has been generated around a diverse range of theorists whose work is concerned less with what texts signify than with how they exert an affective impact on the readers and viewers who encounter them. With theories of affect well developed in film studies,² it is surprising that television, a medium long associated with intimacy and emotional excess, has so long been left on the sidelines of debates on affect in visual media. The books under review here present provocative attempts to develop theoretical work on emotion and affect for television studies.

This project comes with the vast challenges posed by television's diverse and unpredictable audiences. And yet for both Kristyn Gorton and Misha Kavka affect provides a new focus for extending their analyses offscreen to consider the hearts and bodies of the viewers involved in the television experience. The title of Gorton's book, *Media Audiences: Television, Meaning and Emotion*, boldly posits the centrality of emotion in understanding television audiences. The book is

intended as a teaching aid and an introductory guide to audience studies. It provides an accessible outline of the field whilst also offering fresh insights through its focus on emotion. Gorton is concerned with 'the ways in which we orientate ourselves in front of the television' (p. ix) and she considers how emotion is cultivated by television producers to encourage certain kinds of intensely intimate engagements with the medium. Cognisant of the possibilities for distraction and ambient viewing built into television's domestic role, she argues that television uses emotion to sustain the interest of potentially distracted viewers.

In *Reality Television, Affect and Intimacy: Reality Matters*, Kavka similarly argues for the centrality of relations of feeling and intimacy in the pleasures of television. Drawing on early writing about the nature of the medium, she posits that television is essentially a 'technology of intimacy' (p. 20) defined by its affective capacity to forge a sense of connection between offscreen viewers, onscreen characters and an 'imagined community' (p. 17) of viewers. Kavka uses a concern with affect in a way that not only illuminates the value of this theoretical model for television studies but also provides essential new insights into work on reality television.

Focusing her study through the lens of affect enables Kavka to step outside what she describes as 'the usual binaries of television studies: factual versus fictional programming, information versus entertainment, audiences of citizens versus consumers etc' (p. x), to describe a genre which by its very nature confounds such distinctions. An interest in feeling before representation allows her to transcend the limitations of discussions about the (in)authenticity of the genre. By shifting the debate to consider the role of affect in the construction of reality on these programmes, Kavka demonstrates how feelings of intimacy, simultaneity and proximity are bound up in this format's concern with objective truth.

For Gorton, too, affect opens up new analytical possibilities. Her instructive fifth chapter employs ideas about affect derived largely from feminist scholarship to counter film theory's traditional alignment of emotional distance with critical thought. She defends the emotional excesses of television by arguing that intellectual and emotional engagement need not be diametrically opposed. Furthermore, in her case studies, a focus on emotion foregrounds hitherto unacknowledged commonalities between apparently dissimilar television formats, from reality television and soap opera to middle-brow television and 'high-end' quality dramas.

While these case studies certainly demonstrate the importance of affect for television production, they do not entirely fulfil the promise of the book's opening. A concern with 'the way we orient ourselves' before the television shifts towards a focus on the intentions of producers in relation to their perceived viewership. Gorton's analyses rely on audience research by other theorists but the bulk of her conclusions are based on a consideration of how the television industry's 'valuation and

use of emotion' (p. 144) informs the formal structure of television texts. In line with this approach, Gorton relies on interviews with professionals such as writer/producer Kay Mellor and those working in the UK and Irish soap industry. This work on the industry reveals the value placed on emotion by writers and producers, but the reliance on industry opinion does mean that a concern with the contextually specific engagements of audiences with television recedes into the background of otherwise stimulating analyses.

Gorton's chapter on *Wifeswap* (Channel 4, 2003-) yields interesting ideas as to how emotion is represented onscreen as a tool for forging bonds of community across socioeconomic and racial divides. Yet her concern with how emotion is '*fashioned* by producers' (p. 100) leads the analysis to focus on the show's overt representational messages to women and circumvents a consideration of the complex ways in which viewers in the home might engage emotionally with the programme. A more extensive grappling with the problems of privacy, audience diversity, domestic space and personal history could prove more productive than troublesome for Gorton's analysis. However, the suggestions for further reading at the end of each chapter serve as a reminder that this is an introductory text and these case studies are intended as stimulation for further inquiry rather than offering themselves as the final word on their subjects.

Much of what is left unexplored in Gorton's provocative introduction to emotion on television is addressed by Kavka's more theoretically ambitious application of affect theory to television studies. For it is precisely in the difficult spaces between the screen and embodied viewers that Kavka's study locates the productive potential of affect in reality television. Extending the work of Brian Massumi, Kavka posits that, due to its uncontained, amorphous nature, affect constitutes a meeting point or 'cusp between the individual and the collective psyche' (p. xi). Kavka thus understands affect as something fundamentally social, much like television. This idea is critical for considering television's mediation between public and private spheres, but the concept is also a vital development in the theorization of affect for popular and visual media in which affect is often discussed in terms of individual experience.

Kavka invokes affect to explain reality television's construction of a social space somewhere between public and private realms. In the process she debunks dismissive ideas about the pleasures of reality television. Voyeurism is a charge often levelled against the genre and Kavka's chapter on *Big Brother* (Endemol, 1999-) posits that the very social emotion of shame might complicate the common association between watching reality television and voyeurism. Kavka reconsiders this thinking by distinguishing between the social nature of television viewing and the dyadic relationship between viewer and screen theorized in psychoanalytic film theory.

In her chapter on reality dating shows, or 'Real-Love TV' (p. 105), the notion of affect as a 'cusp' again becomes central. These shows ask their

audiences to refer to their own feelings in order to understand and judge the veracity of the love connection onscreen. The confirmation of love on these shows happens not privately but is felt *as real* in the 'sticky performative spaces between bodies' (p. 127). From this claim, Kavka moves her analysis towards conceptions of the public sphere, radically reworking the ideas of Habermas to argue that 'Real-Love TV' constitutes a particular kind of public sphere, 'an externalised space made palpable' (p. 129) by affect.

Kavka's final chapter, 'The public sphere queered', introduces her most daring ideas about affect. Kavka finds in reality television's excessive intimacy the potential for an antiheteronormative or 'queering' impulse. Informed by Berlant and Warner's account of how heteronormativity is sustained by naturalized divisions between public and private space, Kavka argues that the emotional excess and intimacy of reality television produces 'a reconfiguration of public/private spaces that is hardly heteronormative even if its representational content often is' (p. 139). This reconfiguration is most keenly felt in those moments when the banal and formulaic nature of reality television breaks open to expose subjects caught between their private selves and a performance of social identity. These examples of 'too much' (p. 161) emotion and intimacy unravel not only the performance onscreen but the fiction that everyday life is natural rather than performative.

While I am seduced by this analysis, which explains so much about my own pleasure in watching reality television, I have reservations about how far Kavka estimates the transgressive power of affect in this genre and how much these ideas can assuage my feelings of complicity when engaging so closely with formats overtly structured by patriarchal and heteronormative assumptions. Gorton's analyses may not fulfil the radical promise of the ideas about affect that she introduces, but her work has shown the television industry's investment in manipulating our emotions. In their combined impact, these two studies suggest the need for an approach to affect on television that balances the possibility of emotional manipulation with the radical potential of television intimacy.

doi:10.1093/screen/hjp050

Jamie Sexton, *Alternative Film Culture in Inter-War Britain* (Exeter Studies in Film History). Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2008, 230 pp.

MARGARET DICKINSON

The subject of this new study is notoriously difficult to name as it covers varied film-related activities which share, most conspicuously, a de facto condition of being outside or marginal to the commercial film business. Terms such as 'art film,' 'documentary' or 'agit-prop' relate to just part of the subject, while 'minority', 'specialist' or 'niche' are unsatisfactory because they emphasize and endorse marginality. Sexton hesitates

audiences to refer to their own feelings in order to understand and judge the veracity of the love connection onscreen. The confirmation of love on these shows happens not privately but is felt *as real* in the 'sticky performative spaces between bodies' (p. 127). From this claim, Kavka moves her analysis towards conceptions of the public sphere, radically reworking the ideas of Habermas to argue that 'Real-Love TV' constitutes a particular kind of public sphere, 'an externalised space made palpable' (p. 129) by affect.

Kavka's final chapter, 'The public sphere queered', introduces her most daring ideas about affect. Kavka finds in reality television's excessive intimacy the potential for an antiheteronormative or 'queering' impulse. Informed by Berlant and Warner's account of how heteronormativity is sustained by naturalized divisions between public and private space, Kavka argues that the emotional excess and intimacy of reality television produces 'a reconfiguration of public/private spaces that is hardly heteronormative even if its representational content often is' (p. 139). This reconfiguration is most keenly felt in those moments when the banal and formulaic nature of reality television breaks open to expose subjects caught between their private selves and a performance of social identity. These examples of 'too much' (p. 161) emotion and intimacy unravel not only the performance onscreen but the fiction that everyday life is natural rather than performative.

While I am seduced by this analysis, which explains so much about my own pleasure in watching reality television, I have reservations about how far Kavka estimates the transgressive power of affect in this genre and how much these ideas can assuage my feelings of complicity when engaging so closely with formats overtly structured by patriarchal and heteronormative assumptions. Gorton's analyses may not fulfil the radical promise of the ideas about affect that she introduces, but her work has shown the television industry's investment in manipulating our emotions. In their combined impact, these two studies suggest the need for an approach to affect on television that balances the possibility of emotional manipulation with the radical potential of television intimacy.

doi:10.1093/screen/hjp050

Jamie Sexton, *Alternative Film Culture in Inter-War Britain* (Exeter Studies in Film History). Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2008, 230 pp.

MARGARET DICKINSON

The subject of this new study is notoriously difficult to name as it covers varied film-related activities which share, most conspicuously, a de facto condition of being outside or marginal to the commercial film business. Terms such as 'art film,' 'documentary' or 'agit-prop' relate to just part of the subject, while 'minority', 'specialist' or 'niche' are unsatisfactory because they emphasize and endorse marginality. Sexton hesitates

between 'alternative' or 'avant-garde' but rejects the latter as insufficiently inclusive and for being a phrase not commonly applied to films in Britain between the wars. (pp. 4–6). His choice of 'alternative' frees him from adjudicating between disputed definitions of 'avant-garde' but does not entirely escape the charge of anachronism, for the industry had only recently established a context in which 'film' achieved its secondary meaning of roughly ninety minutes of expensive narrative fiction, thereby providing a norm to which there might be alternatives. Consequently, as Sexton notes, 'During the inter-war period fixed conceptual divisions between types of film production did not exist' (p. 4).

The elements Sexton includes under this 'alternative' heading are film criticism and theory, the film society movement, the documentary movement and the production of films which can roughly be characterized by their production, by film industry professionals with artistic ambition, in ways that were often experimental and nearly always low budget. Leftwing political film and amateur film are touched on, but in less depth.

Much of this subject matter, Sexton acknowledges, has previously been researched and discussed. His main purpose is not to challenge his predecessors but to present a more comprehensive account which is needed because, 'no full-length study has thus far accounted for all these as interconnected areas of British alternative film culture' (p. 9). This is broadly true, although the 1980 collection *Traditions of Independence*¹ links the documentary movement, the avant garde, film criticism, political film and amateur film while Bert Hogenkamp's *Deadly Parallels*² on film and leftwing politics also refers to the London Film Society, film criticism and the documentary movement. A distinguishing feature of Sexton's study, however, is the attention he pays to marginal commercial or would-be commercial production, although two of his examples, Kenneth Macpherson's *Borderline* and Helen Biggar and Norman McLaren's *Hell Unlimited*, also feature in earlier studies.³ It is also well established that many of the people involved in the London Film Society also worked in the industry, but Sexton moves into less familiar territory by examining in detail a number of independent, innovative films. These include Adrian Brunel's series of very inexpensive parodies made in 1924 and 1925, Ivor Montagu's more ambitious comedy burlesques of 1928, and an experimental comedy, *C.O.D – A Mellow Drama*, from 1929 by Lloyd T. Richards, Desmond Dickinson, Gerald Gibbs and Harcourt Templeman.

The discussion of the Brunel and Montagu films contributes significantly to the map of alternative film networks since they were innovative, risky ventures made by key players in the Film Society in collaboration with major authors: A.A. Milne with Brunel; H.G. Wells with Montagu. *C.O.D* is interesting for its connection with and divergence from industry practice. The makers are described as 'technicians at the Cricklewood Stoll studios' (p. 72), a point not much

1 Don Macpherson (ed.), *Traditions of Independence: British Cinema in the Thirties* (London: British Film Institute, 1980).

2 Bert Hogenkamp, *Deadly Parallels: Film and the Left in Britain 1929–39* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1986).

3 Roland Cosandy, 'On borderline', in Michael O'Pray (ed.), *The British Avant-Garde Film* (Luton: The Arts Council of England/John Libbey Media/University of Luton, 1996); Hogenkamp, *Deadly Parallels*, p. 151.

developed by Sexton but which is intriguing in relation to the development of specific career paths in the industry where, as the film business became increasingly established and hierarchical, technical expertise became less likely to lead to a career in directing. At the time of their collaboration, these four creative technicians were evidently keen to experiment and qualified to direct. Judging from their credits on the British Film Institute database, all continued working in film and three had extremely long and busy careers in Britain and the USA, yet between them they have few directing credits and the productions to which they contributed (with a few striking exceptions) appear rather undistinguished. Was this the future those four men envisaged? This is just one of many questions inspired by Sexton's material on these 'quasi'-commercial films and it is encouraging that his work seems to have stimulated others to investigate further.⁴ The overlap between general and alternative film culture is particularly revealing during this period, and Sexton usefully demonstrates how industry norms were not yet taken for granted and the memory of cinema as a fluid, open and varied phenomenon was still fresh.

In addition to its breadth of coverage, Sexton's map of alternative film culture is well organized, clearly written and contains detailed descriptions of the films discussed. One minor complaint is that the filmography does not include details of print location and availability. Nevertheless, teachers, students and the general reader will welcome the book as a good overview of an important subject, more accessible than some of the most comprehensive existing texts. However, while the clarity is admirable, I am tempted to suggest that it is achieved in part by the avoidance of argument. When Sexton refers to other people's work he frequently agrees (p. 150) and rarely expresses more than mild disagreement (p. 123); he also tends to avoid mentioning judgements in conflict with his own. For instance, when discussing the documentary movement he broadly accepts the favourable view promoted by friendly critics and the filmmakers themselves without with less hagiographic intervening comment.⁵

A distaste for confrontation also seems to permeate his treatment of the history, which stresses networks of cooperation but pays little attention to their place in contemporary conflicts. For example, he describes the development of a workers' film movement from the late 1920s (pp. 104-6) and quotes Paul Marris's assessment of their productions as mainly 'counter newsreels' (p. 114) without noting that this was happening in the wake of the 1926 general strike, an action which some people hoped, and others feared, would lead to revolution and which the commercial newsreels had reported with a marked anti-strike bias. There is no mention of the film industry's own struggles over labour conditions even though prominent figures in alternative film culture were active in the new film trade union, the Association of Cinematograph Technicians (ACT). Battles over political censorship are mentioned (p. 25-9), as are the leftwing political affiliations of Montagu and others, yet the sense that

4 Seb Manley, 'Comedy and experiment in British Alternative Film: the funny peculiar case of Ivor Montagu's *Bluebottles*', in *Scope, an Online Journal of Film and TV Studies*, University of Nottingham. <<http://www.scope.nottingham.ac.uk/index.php>> [accessed 19 November 2009].

5 See for instance, Paul Willemen, 'Presentation', in Macpherson (ed.) *Traditions of Independence*, pp. 2-4; Brian Winston, *Claiming the Real: the Documentary Film Revisited* (London: British Film Institute, 1995) pp. 35-68.

the period was (widely perceived as) a time of escalating historic conflict is missing or underplayed.

Another tension which figures very little in Sexton's story is that surrounding the changing structure of the commercial film business and the related politicking about government intervention. His reticence on this seems surprising given that members of the documentary movement – Paul Rotha in particular – were extremely vocal contributors to the debate and that he himself wishes to stress the connectedness of alternative film culture with the industry. When he relates that the Montagu and Wells pictures 'did not make a profit and this led to the bankruptcy of Angle pictures' (p. 69), it is surely relevant that the influence of distributors, particularly their ability to impose blind and block booking, was a major bone of contention, and that producers of far more expensive and conventional films were complaining that they could not make a profit under these conditions.

Sexton only tentatively approaches the contested question of how far the emergent British film culture was shaped by a hostile cultural establishment. He gives some indication that he disagrees with the view that British filmmakers, compared to their continental counterparts, suffered from a lack of interest and involvement from practitioners and consumers of the older arts. He documents counter examples of British artists and writers who participated in film culture but when he directly refers to the issue it is to suggest that such participation or lack of it should not be regarded as important because 'This would seem to fly in the face of those who wished to establish film as an art on its own terms' (p. 166). In principle this is an interesting point, but one that needs defending. The old arts were not rigidly segregated: critics did not deny art-in-its-own-right status to music because composers of opera cooperated with authors, nor did they demote sculpture because many sculptors would also paint and draw. The question, which had practical implications, is rather about the cultural and social status of cinema. How far could filmmakers benefit, as writers and painters did, from patronage and promotion by wealthy connoisseurs? Was an understanding of cinema among the requirements of an education in culture? Did the clientele of galleries and concert halls flock to the cinema with equal enthusiasm? The cinema as phenomenon certainly attracted the notice of the cultural elite but the attention was not necessarily either sympathetic or well informed. Virginia Woolf's famous essay on cinema, which Sexton refers to (p. 63), is often taken as evidence of a commitment to avant-garde cinema,⁶ but this is questionable. Woolf expounds on the possibilities of the medium in completely abstract terms, yet of cinema as an actual practice she says with sweeping contempt, 'it can say everything before it has anything to say'.⁷ Written in 1926, this blanket dismissal of Gance, Griffiths, Murnau and Lang can hardly be construed as encouragement. But if Woolf's essay is sometimes quoted as representative of a positive attitude on the part of the Bloomsbury Group it may be by comparison with the overt antipathy of those other arbiters

⁶ See, for instance, O'Pray, *The British Avant-Garde Film*, p. 7.

⁷ Virginia Woolf, 'The cinema', *Arts*, June 1926; quoted in O'Pray (ed.), *The British Avant-Garde Film*, p. 36.

8 See, for instance, William Hunter, 'The art form of democracy', *Scrutiny: a Quarterly Revue*, 1 May 1932; quoted in Francis Mulhern, *The Moment of Scrutiny* (London: New Left Books, 1979), p. 52.

of cultural value, the intellectuals associated with F.R. Leavis and the magazine *Scrutiny*.⁸

It may be that Sexton underplays the evidence of struggle because his concern is to emphasize the achievements of the protagonists of British alternative film culture and to elaborate on the breadth and variety of their work. I would argue, however, that those achievements are better appreciated and certainly better understood with reference to a hostile commercial and cultural environment. The scope of Sexton's 'alternative' makes sense only against the background of a cinephobic intelligentsia and a highly concentrated business structure inimical to independents. Otherwise why would serious criticism, experimental shorts, documentary and many successful foreign features now be classified along with amateur, corporate and sponsored film as marginal to general cinema culture?

doi:10.1093/screen/hjp045

Contributors

Stella Bruzzi is Professor of Film and Television Studies at the University of Warwick and Chair of the Faculty of Arts. She has published widely in various areas of film and television studies, including most recently a book on the television series *Seven Up*, and *Men's Cinema* (2009), a long study of masculinity and mise-en-scene in Hollywood for Wallflower Press's Close-Up series.

Margaret Dickinson is an independent filmmaker and writer. She is author of *Rogue Reels: Oppositional Film in Britain 1945-1990* (1999) and, with Sarah Street, *Cinema and State: the Film Industry and the British Government 1927-1984* (1985). Recent films include: *City Swimmers* (2006) and *Memories of a Future* (2008).

Barbara Klinger is Professor of Film and Media Studies in the Department of Communication and Culture at Indiana University. Along with numerous articles, she is author of *Melodrama and Meaning: History, Culture and the Films of Douglas Sirk* (1994) and *Beyond the Multiplex: Cinema, New Technologies and the Home* (2006).

Mary Harrod is a PhD student at King's College, London, working on a thesis entitled 'Comedy and social change in French cinema since 1990'. She was awarded a BA degree with first class honours from Oxford University in Modern Languages and a Distinction in the Master's Contemporary Cinema Cultures at King's.

Fincina Hopgood is book reviews editor for the online film journal *Senses of Cinema*. Her writings on Jane Campion have appeared in *Senses of Cinema*, *Metro Magazine*, *Australasian Drama Studies* and *Journal of Interdisciplinary Gender Studies*.

Dorota Ostrowska is Lecturer in Film and Modern Media at the Department of History of Art and Screen Media, Birkbeck, University of London. She is author of *Reading the French New Wave: Critics, Writers and Art Cinema in France* (2008), and coeditor of *European Cinemas in the TV Age* (2007).

Alexia Smit is undertaking a PhD in the Department of Theatre, Film and Television at the University of Glasgow. Her research is concerned with affect and visceral displays of the body on contemporary British and US television.

Jacob Smith is Lecturer in the Institute of Film and Television Studies at the University of Nottingham. His book, *Vocal Tracks: Performance and Sound Media* (2008) is an examination of the styles of vocal performance that developed in tandem with sound media technologies. He has also published articles on media history and performance in journals such as *Film Quarterly*, *Film Criticism*, *Television and New Media*, *Velvet Light Trap*, *Early Popular Visual Culture* and *Journal of Popular Music Studies*.

Esther Sonnet is Head of the School of Creative Arts, Film and Media at the University of Portsmouth. Her work has appeared in a wide range of journals and collections. She is coeditor, with Lee Grieveson and Peter Stanfield, of *Mob Culture: Hidden Histories of the American Gangster Film* (2005), and is currently working on two books: *Dangerous to Know: Desire and Transgression in the Hollywood Gangster Film 1929–39* and *Forget Noir: Hollywood Film Adaptation and Women's Crime Writing 1939–60*.

Julian Stringer is Associate Professor of Film and Television Studies at the University of Nottingham. He is coeditor of *Scope: an Online Journal of Film and TV Studies*. His most recent book, coedited with Alastair Phillips, is *Japanese Cinema: Texts and Contexts* (2007).

Chia-Chi Wu received a PhD from the Department of Critical Studies, School of Cinematic Arts at University of Southern California, and is Assistant Professor in the Department of English at the National Taiwan Normal University. She contributed an essay on international film festivals to *Cinema Taiwan: Politics, Popularity and State of the Arts* (2007). She is currently researching Taiwanese queer films of the twenty-first century.

Notes to Contributors

There has recently been a major development in the submission and processing of manuscripts at *Screen*. On 1 March 2009, after much discussion and in collaboration with our publisher OUP, we switched to the **ScholarOne Manuscripts** online submission system. Many readers will already be familiar with this method, but for those who are not, it will in essence mean that manuscripts are submitted through the ScholarOne Manuscripts site, and thereafter all communications between editorial office, author and peer reviewers will be channelled through, and logged by, the system. Our intention, in moving to this new system, is to improve efficiency and clarity in all aspects of the process: providing, and encouraging from others, a swifter response; creating an easily accessible history of a manuscript's progress; reducing the need for photocopying and printing.

Authors are guided through the submission procedure with onscreen prompts and instructions; however, if you experience any difficulties or have any comments to make about using ScholarOne Manuscripts, please contact our editorial office. Like any new system it may benefit from some fine-tuning, and if there is anything we can do to improve the transition we would like to know. For full details of online submission, visit (http://www.oxfordjournals.org/our_journals/screen/for_authors/screen_submission_online.html) Manuscripts should not exceed 8000 words, excluding footnotes. Submission of a manuscript is taken by the Editors to imply that the paper represents original work not previously published and not under consideration for publication, elsewhere; and if accepted for publication that it will not be published elsewhere in the same form, in any language, without the consent of the Editors and Publisher. The Author should obtain the necessary permissions to include in the paper copyright material such as illustrations, extended quotations, etc.

Authors whose work is published in *Screen* will receive one free copy of the journal issue and, if requested, 25 offprints of their contribution. Republication in an Author's own work is freely permissible, provided due credit is given to the

original publication in *Screen*. For information on permissions, visit (http://www.oxfordjournals.org/access_purchase/rights_permissions.html)

Notes and references, which should be kept to a minimum, should be on an automatic numbering system. Style for citations of written sources is as follows:

1. Christian Metz, *Psychoanalysis and Cinema: the Imaginary Signifier*, trans. Celia Britton et al. (London: Macmillan, 1982).
2. Ginette Vincendeau, 'Melodramatic realism: on some French women's films in the 1930s', *Screen*, vol. 30, no. 3 (1989), pp. 51–65.
3. Monika Treut, 'Female misbehaviour', in Laura Pietrapaolo and Ada Testaferri (eds), *Feminisms in the Cinema* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 1995), pp. 106–21.

References to *films* in both notes and main text should include full title, and in the case of non-English language films original release title should precede US and/or British release title, followed by director and release date in round brackets: *A bout de souffle/Breathless* (Jean-Luc Godard, 1960)

Where such information is relevant to the argument, details of production company and/or country of origin may also be included: *The Big Sleep* (Howard Hawks, Warner Bros, US, 1945)

References to *television programmes* should be dated from the year of first transmission, and, in the case of long-running serials, the duration of the run should be indicated. Details of production company, transmitting channel, country, etc should be supplied where relevant: *Coronation Street* (Granada, 1961–)

Where writers or producers are credited their role should be indicated:

Where the Difference Begins (w. David Mercer, BBC, 1961)

For further details, visit (<http://www.gla.ac.uk/services/screen/submitpapers/>)

COMING SOON

Volume 51, number 2

AKIN ADESOKAN: Abderrahmane Sissako and the poetics of engaged expatriation

ANDREW BURKE: Music, memory and modern life: Saint Etienne's London

SEAN CUBITT: The sound of sunlight

AMY HOLDSWORTH: Televisual memory

FROM PREVIOUS ISSUES

Volume 50, number 4

VIVIAN SOBCHACK: Animation and automation, or the incredible effortfulness of being

SYLVIE BISSONNETTE: Cyborg brain in Robert Lepage's *Possible Worlds*

ERIKA BALSOM: A cinema in the gallery, a cinema in ruins

LEZ COOKE: *Three Ring Circus*: the ur-text of modernist television drama

PAUL JULIAN SMITH: Almodóvar's unpublished short stories and the question of queer auteurism

Volume 50, number 3

GIL TOFFELL: 'Come see, and hear, the mother tongue!' Yiddish cinema in interwar London

MAGGIE MAGOR and PHILIP SCHLESINGER: 'For this relief much thanks.' Taxation, film policy and the UK government

VICENTE SÁNCHEZ-BIOSCA: The cinematic image of José Antonio Primo de Rivera: somewhere between a leader and a saint
(Translated by John Shanks)

ISSN 0036-9543 (PRINT)
ISSN 1460-2474 (ONLINE)



OXFORD JOURNALS
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

www.screen.oxfordjournals.org

Screen